MONDAY
February 23, 2026

BENGALURU
CITY EDITION
16 Pages ₹ 6.00

THE HINDU

www.thehindu.com

INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Vol. 57 • No. 45

RNI No. KARENG/1970/49945

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AI SUMMIT PROTEST

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Armed intruder shot dead on Trump estate

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From back office to global brain trust

India's GCC 4.0 era of high-end R&D, Agentic AI

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DOMINANT DISPLAY

South Africa proves too strong for India

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State govt. plans curbs on phone use for children under 16

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government is mulling over enforcing restrictions on mobile phone usage by children under the age of 16. On Saturday, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah sought the opinions of Vice-Chancellors of public universities in the State, at a meeting which was also attended by Chancellor, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot.

The Chief Minister cited examples of Australia and some European countries that have imposed curbs on social media and mobile phone use for minors, and asked the Vice-Chancellors what they thought about such a move.

"We are seeing students being influenced by social media a lot these days. Many countries have already done it," Mr. Siddaramaiah said.

He also pointed to youth falling into the trap of drugs, referring to the influence of mobile phones, social media, and content related to drug use and other harmful habits.

Govt. initiative

The issue has come into focus even as the State government is planning to launch an initiative called 'Mobile bidi pustaka hidi' (Put down your mobile and pick up a book), aimed at reducing screen time for children and inculcating the habit of reading.

However, this is not the first time the government has spoken about mobile usage. Last month, IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge spoke in the Legislative Assembly about the government's intention to restrict social media access for children.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 4

Time for nations facing tariffs to unionise: Lula

Brazil's President says small countries negotiating individually with bigger ones always lose; he urges countries in the Global South to act together in negotiating with global superpowers

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Instead of negotiating with the U.S. on tariffs separately, countries should form "negotiating blocs", Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said here on Sunday, advocating for "unionisation" of those suffering from the tariffs.

Mr. Lula, himself a trade union leader in the 1980s before he founded Brazil's ruling Workers Party, said that while he did not wish to comment on the internal workings of the U.S. where the Supreme Court struck down the tariffs imposed globally by U.S. President Donald Trump, he hoped that all countries would be "treated equally" by the U.S. on the issue.

Close ties: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in New Delhi on Saturday. ANI

"I want to tell the U.S. President that we don't want a new Cold War. We don't want interference in any other country, we want all countries to be treated equally," Mr. Lula said, answering questions from presspersons at the end of his four-day visit to Delhi.

Brazil and India were the two highest tariffed countries by the U.S., slapped with 50% duties on exports each, and face tariff threats from Mr. Trump over their membership of the BRICS grouping, trade with Iran, and imports of Russian oil. Neither country has thus far concluded a trade deal with the U.S. Mr. Lula, who is expected to visit Washington next month, said he hopes to put all outstanding issues with the U.S. "on the table" for Mr. Trump.

"When a small country negotiates with a bigger country, the agreement will always be harmful for the smaller country. This is the experience that I bring from the trade union and labour movement. To negotiate with the employer, all workers must get together and confront the company policy. If they do it individually, they all lose," he said, likening international trade to his trade union negotiations, adding that countries in the Global South, as well as others, must "act together" in negotiating with global superpowers.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 8

Security forces launch a cordon-and-search operation after an encounter breaks out at Chatroo, Kishtwar, on Sunday. ANI

3 JeM terrorists killed in Kishtwar: Army

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Three Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists were gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, the Army said.

Officials said the bodies of the terrorists were charred beyond recognition as the hut in which they were hiding caught fire during the gunfight. They said a preliminary investigation by security agencies suggests that one of the dead is Saifullah, a JeM commander who entered J&K five years ago.

Earlier, security forces encircled the terrorists and cordoned off the area. The Army said the forces re-engaged the terrorists around 11 a.m. in a "challenging terrain". "The hunt continues and those seeking to disturb peace will find no sanctuary," the Army said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 8

In large numbers: People staging a protest at Kadabagere near Chikkamagaluru on Sunday after a farmhand was killed in an elephant attack. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Second death in a week in jumbo attack triggers protest

The Hindu Bureau
SHIVAMOGGA

The death of an agricultural worker in an elephant attack at Hunasehalli in Chikkamagaluru taluk, the second such incident in the village in a week, triggered protests by local people, who kept the body, forcing the police to resort to lathi-charge on Sunday.

Boramma, 45, a native of Geddalagatte in Kudligi taluk of Vijayanagara district, died after being attacked by a wild elephant at a plantation owned by Nagesh Gowda. She had come to work at the coffee plantation along with her husband, Nagaraj, and their son.

On February 16, Yallappa, an agricultural worker and native of Hanagal taluk in Haveri district, died in the village following an elephant attack.

After his death, a large number of local people gathered in Balehonnur and staged protests. Forest Department officials had begun an operation to capture the wild tusker responsible for the death four days earlier. Within a few minutes after Yallappa's death, the forest staff succeeded in tracing and capturing the animal.

As the news of the woman's death in the elephant attack spread, hundreds of people gathered at Kadabagere village on State Highway 27. They began a protest, keeping the body of the deceased. Hundreds of vehicles were stuck on the road throughout the day.

The protesters were joined by former Minister D.N. Jeevaraj, Janata Dal (S) leader Sudhakar Shetty, and many farmers' leaders and others.

They raised slogans against the State government, the Forest Minister, and officers of the district administration. Mr. Jeevaraj, addressing the gathering, wanted to know why there was a delay in capturing the elephant even after four days of efforts.

Sringeri MLA T.D. Raje Gowda of the Congress also visited the site.

The protesters demanded that Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre visit the site and assure them of a permanent solution to the human-elephant conflict in the region. They also requested a government job for the family members of the deceased, in addition to compensation of ₹50 lakh. The protesters refused to hand over the body until their demands were fulfilled.

By the time Deputy Commissioner N.M. Nagaraj and Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Dayama reached Kadabagere, it was 5 p.m.

As the police intervened, the protesters went berserk. The police resorted to lathi-charge and took several people into custody. Three protesters were said to have been injured in the incident.

NEARBY

Cong. leadership tussle gains traction again

BENGALURU/BELAGAVI
After the crescendo over leadership change and a purported 'November Revolution' in the Congress had died down, the public discussion over leadership has regained traction in the ruling party. » PAGE 4

Modi refers to Nanjangud Rasabale

MYSURU
Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to the export of the three GI products from Karnataka during his 'Mann Ki Baat' on Sunday, and said these products are known for their taste and quality. The Nanjangud Rasabale (bananas) and Mysuru betel leaves have now entered the Maldives market. » PAGE 2

Fresh FIR against Snehamayi Krishna

BENGALURU
Hours after being detained and questioned by the Central Crime Branch for allegedly circulating fabricated documents and manipulated content on social media, RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna is facing yet another criminal case — this time at the Basaveshwara Nagar Police Station. » PAGE 3

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 5

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LIC/P1/2024-25/51/Eng

Is badminton willing to trade depth for speed?

The proposal to replace the 3x21 scoring system with a 3x15 format will go to vote at BWF's Annual General Meeting in April; if adopted, it will reshape how the sport is played and the shuttlers are coached

GETTY IMAGES

Devyanshi Bihani

The Badminton World Federation's proposal to replace the long-standing 3x21 scoring system with a 3x15 format is being regarded as a forward-looking reform – one that promises shorter matches, greater excitement, and improved player welfare, according to the sport's governing body.

The BWF president Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul described it as a move to ensure the sport "continues to grow, inspire, and thrive." She argued that the format will make matches more dynamic and help badminton "stand out in an increasingly fast-paced entertainment landscape." The proposal will go to vote at BWF's Annual General Meeting on April 25, but the direction of travel is already clear.

This is not merely a technical adjustment. It is a shift in the very grammar of badminton. How matches are constructed, how players win, and how the sport is experienced.

From endurance to immediacy

For nearly two decades, elite badminton has evolved into a sport of attrition. The 3x21 point system rewards not just skill, but patience, recovery, and the ability to navigate momentum swings over time.

The proposed format changes that balance. With fewer points in each game, there is less room for error and far less time to recover. A four or five-point run, which is routine in modern badminton, can become decisive. The emphasis shifts from managing the flow of a match to seizing early control.

This inherently favours fast starters who impose themselves quickly, attacking players capable of scoring bursts and strong serve-return exponents who can dictate early rallies. And it could be a disadvantage for defensive players who build pressure over time, tactical players who rely on mid-game adjustments and athletes who traditionally grow into matches.

In effect, the new system compresses matches into their most volatile phase – the closing stretch.

When matches get shorter...

Badminton's most memorable matches have rarely been about speed alone. They have been about how contests evolve – how players adapt, endure, and ultimately outthink and outlast their opponents.

Take the 2006 Malaysian Open final between era-defining rivals Lee Chong Wei and Lin Dan. Trailing 13-20 in the deciding game, Lee produced one of the most remarkable turnarounds in the sport's history by winning 10 consecutive points to clinch it 23-21.

Another case in point was the 2015 Japan Open final between Viktor Axelsen and Lin. The decider showed why Lin is often hailed as one of badminton's all-time greats. Trailing by a mile as Axelsen surged to an 11-3 lead at the interval, Lin mounted a stunning comeback, going on an 11-2 run to edge ahead 14-13.

The contest swung back and forth, with both players exchanging leads and relentless rallies until it was locked at 19-19. Lin held his nerve in the closing moments, taking the final two points to seal a thrilling victory. The Chinese was well past his physical peak and served a reminder that badminton is as much about intelligence as it is about intensity.

More recently, it was H.S. Prannoy's win over Koki Watanabe at the China Open last year. The Indian was down 15-20 in the deciding game before he shifted gears and saved five match points to win 23-21. It is considered a miracle win. A 50-shot rally near the end and an unshakable defence helped him save all match points. While this was a first-round match, Prannoy's comeback on a Super 1000 stage was widely praised given his age and recent struggles.

Players like Japan's Nozomi Okuhara have built success by sustaining pressure across long rallies, either through relentless defence or by forcing opponents into errors over time. One of the greatest women's singles matches ever played was the 2017 World Championships title decider between Okuhara and P.V. Sindhu. It lasted an hour and 50 minutes.

Okuhara's defence against the Indian's relentless attack created a match that ebbed and flowed, with neither player able to dominate for long. Okuhara could achieve victory only because the format allowed the match to stretch into a test of stamina and resilience. In the 3×15 system, that space to grind an opponent down is reduced.

Carolina Marin's victory at the 2019 China Open is another example. Returning from injury, she was initially down by a game and trailed 13-19 in the decider against Tai Tzu-ying. Yet, she fought back point by point, maintaining relentless pressure to turn the match around.

One can also revisit the 2015 World Championships quarterfinals and watch Indonesia's Lindaweni Fanetri. Down 14-20 in the second game after losing the opener, she saved multiple match points and reeled off eight straight points to force a decider, before closing out the match.

Doubles, already the fastest discipline, could become even more volatile. With games to 15, there is little scope to recover from a poor service sequence or a brief lapse in concentration.

The 2019 World Championships men's doubles final between Mohammad Ahsan/Hendra Setiawan and Takuro Hoki/Yugo Kobayashi was a contest of experience against pace with the Indonesians' control emerging over time.

In the 2024 China Masters mixed doubles event, Malaysia's Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei were 11-20 down in the second game of a match. They saved all match points, winning 23-21, before carrying that momentum into the decider. It was a reminder that even the fastest discipline relies on momentum built over time.

These contests were compelling because they allowed time for strategies to emerge, for weaknesses to be exposed, and for players to respond. The 3x21 system allows a slow starter to recover, a defender to turn the match into an endurance test, and a trailing player to rebuild. The proposed system shortens that arc. It does not eliminate comebacks, but it might make them rarer. Because the space for adjustment narrows, and with it, the layers that define elite contests.

The Indian context

Sindhu's biggest victories, including her Olympic runs, have come from her ability to stay in rallies, absorb pressure, and grow into matches. Prannoy, too, has made a career out of comebacks.

K. Srikanth might not mind the change. At his peak, his game was based on pace and attacking precision. In theory, a shorter format could suit that style provided he can consistently start fast. Lakshya Sen may be one of the Indian players best placed to adapt. His ability to take the early initiative could prove valuable.

In doubles, the picture is unclear. India's leading pairs: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, and Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand are capable of explosive starts but consistency remains a concern. There is little room to recover from lapses, and unforced errors will carry greater consequences.

Yet, there is also an opportunity. Shorter matches reduce the physical gap between players. Nations that have historically relied and invested heavily in endurance training, notably China and Japan, may lose some of their structural advantage.

A sport shaped by television

For a sport increasingly conscious of broadcast windows and audience retention, the logic is understandable. It is impossible to separate this proposal from the broader pressures facing modern sport.

This is not the first time the BWF has attempted to alter the scoring system. Previous proposals were debated and rejected, after failing to secure sufficient support among stakeholders. What is different now is the framing. The system is being presented not as an experiment but as a strategic necessity tied to player welfare, broadcast viability, and the sport's long-term growth.

Badminton, like many Olympic sports, is competing for attention in a crowded entertainment landscape. Shorter matches are easier to schedule and broadcast, and more accessible to new audience.

But there is a trade-off. The push for brevity often comes at the expense of complexity. Sports that compress their formats risk losing the very elements that made them distinctive.

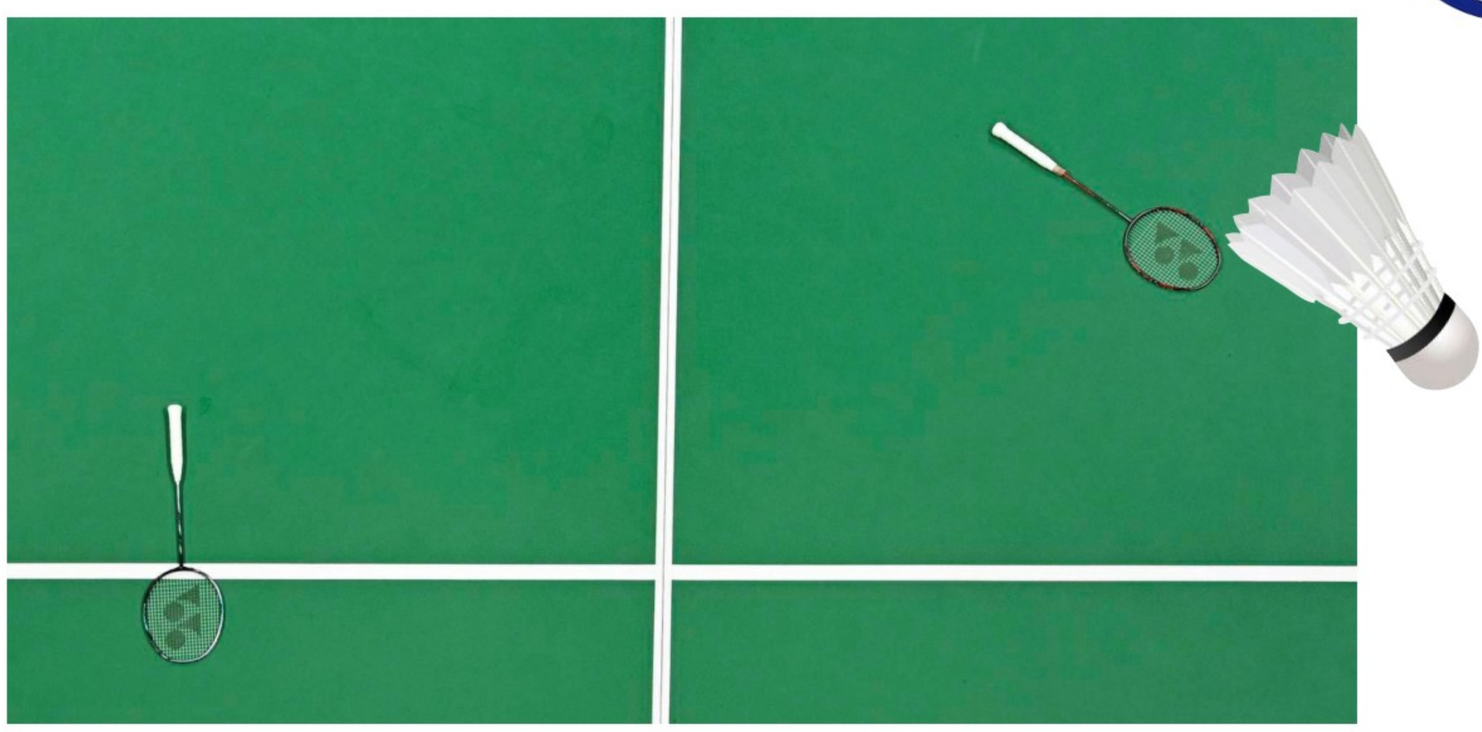
In badminton's case, that distinctiveness lies in its ability to combine speed with endurance, precision with patience. It is one of the few sports where rallies can be both explosive and prolonged, where matches can swing dramatically over time. Reducing the length of games risks tilting that balance too far in one direction.

If the new system is adopted, it will reshape how badminton is played and the shuttlers are coached. Training methods will evolve. Tactical approaches will shift. The next generation of players will grow up in a different game.

THE GIST

- The new format is not merely a technical adjustment. It is a shift in the very grammar of badminton
- For a sport increasingly conscious of broadcast windows and audience retention, the logic is understandable
- The 3x21 system allows time for strategies to emerge, for weaknesses to be exposed, and for players to respond

> Our responsibility is to ensure badminton continues to grow, inspire, and thrive at every level. After extensive testing and consultation, we believe the 3x15 system provides a strong foundation for the sport's future
>
> **LEESWADTRAKUL**
> BWF president



Strays: Civic bodies mull target-based surgeries to scale up ABC programme

The plan has come even as corporations are scouting for locations to set up shelters to comply with SC directives

Chetan B.C.
BENGALURU

In a bid to scale up the Animal Birth Control (ABC) exercise, the Bengaluru corporations are planning to introduce strict target-based surgeries and an accountability system, sources confirmed to *The Hindu*.

However, the shortage of space in ABC centres, which are currently operational, poses a hurdle to implementing the rule. Officials acknowledged the issue and said they were upgrading the existing ABC centres with additional space and facilities.

Further, the corporations said they were searching for vacant land parcels to set up more ABC centres. However, the exercise has been sluggish.

The move to scale up ABC comes even as the corporations are scouting for locations to set up shelters and new ABC centres to comply with the Supreme Court directives requiring them to relocate dogs living within institutions (both private and government) to shelters.

"Although there are monthly targets, the rule was barely followed by the vendors. But this is a primary exercise for curbing bite incidents," a senior official from the North Corporation told *The Hindu*, adding that now they were making it mandatory and implementing strict follow-ups. However, an official who was earlier in charge of the ABC programme explained that complying with the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) ABC rules while scaling up the surgeries was not possible in the past with the existing infrastructure.

There is a shortage of space at ABC centres, which are currently operational, posing a hurdle to implementing the rule. SUDHAKARA JAIN

"The AWBI rules mandate monitoring dogs that have undergone surgery for three days. We only had an installed capacity of 250 for monitoring neutered dogs," the official said. "So even if we had 300 dogs for surgery, we could operate on only 250. There was no scope for scaling up the ABC programme," the officer added.

Shortcoming

Due to such shortcomings, the then Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) had even planned to ignore the AWBI's ABC rules and implement the Catch, Neuter, Vaccinate, and Release (CNVR) technique, which required just to carry out the procedure. However, according to the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) officials, the plan lost momentum during the transition of the civic body and was eventually shelved.

The plan also did not receive a positive response from animal rights activists. Arun Prasad, an animal rights activist, told *The Hindu* that the AWBI's ABC rules are drafted scientifically and must be strictly followed to ensure there are no botched surgeries.

"If the dogs are released without being monitored for a few days, the stitches may come off as they roam freely. This will not only cost a dog its life but also open the door to the spread of diseases," Mr. Prasad said, adding that the corporations should not consider CNVR even now.

Caution

The activists have welcomed the move by the corporations to increase installed capacity but have cautioned against burdening veterinarians with excessive neutering workloads, citing earlier instances of botched operations due to pressure. They have suggested that the corporations train and hire more veterinarians for the effective implementation of target-based surgeries.

Besides the CNVR, the BBMP had also planned microchipping and feeding programmes. However, these plans are not under consideration now. The civic bodies confirmed that the plans were not entirely shelved but may be revisited after implementing the Supreme Court directives.

Apart from these programmes, the civic bodies' exercise to identify feeding spots across the city has also been sluggish. Officials said the work was ongoing and noted that plans were afoot to dedicate shelter space within the existing ABC centres.

PM refers to export of GI-tagged Nanjangud Rasabale, Mysuru betel leaves, and Indi Lime

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

The Nanjangud Rasabale (bananas) and Mysuru betel leaves, which have long been enjoying a good demand in the domestic market, have now entered the Maldives market.

About 500 kg of Nanjangud Rasabale and 250 kg of Mysuru betel leaves, known locally as Chigurele or Veelyadele, were part of the first-ever air-shipment of Karnataka's Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged produce flagged off to Maldives, along with 500 kg Indi lemons, cultivated primarily in Vijayapura district, last month.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to the export of the three GI products from Karnataka during his 'Mann Ki Baat' on Sunday, and said these products were known for their taste and quality. He added that agricultural products were now reaching foreign countries more easily by air.

Speaking to *The Hindu* after Mr. Modi's reference to the export of Nanjangud Rasabale, Mysuru betel leaves and Indi Lime, Deputy Director of Horticulture, Mysuru, Manjunath said the export of the GI-tagged bananas, betel leaves and lemons on a 'trial basis' was a significant milestone. He said the consignment had been well received by buyers in Maldives, effectively opening up an export channel. "We are optimistic and looking forward to sustained exports," he added.

Mysuru betel leaves, characterised by their heart-shaped form and pungent flavour, are traditionally valued for their digestive and mouth-freshening properties. M. A. SRIRAM

The consignment was facilitated by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority in coordination with the Karnataka Department of Horticulture and the Indian Council for Agricultural Research). The produce was sourced directly from farmers in Mysuru and Vijayapura districts.

"While there is steady local demand, exports will fetch better prices and strengthen farmers economically," Mr. Manjunath said. Nanjangud Rasabale, known for its distinctive taste and texture, had faced a serious setback about eight years ago due to a disease that forced many farmers to abandon cultivation. However, sustained technical interventions and government support have helped revive the crop, with the cultivated area expanding in recent years. At present, around 200 farmers grow Nanjangud Rasabale across nearly 250 acres, according to officials.

Mysuru betel leaves once patronised by the erstwhile Mysore Maharajas, continue to be an integral part of auspicious occasions.

Indi Lime, cultivated predominantly in Indi taluk of Vijayapura district, is noted for its strong aroma and high juice content.

Farmer electrocuted after live wire snaps in Kunigal

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 65-year-old farmer was electrocuted after a live wire snapped and fell on him in Choudripalya village of Kasaba hobli in Kunigal taluk on Sunday morning. The deceased has been identified as Thimmappa. According to police, Thimmappa was watering the crops on his agricultural land around 6 a.m. when a power line reportedly snapped and fell on him. He was electrocuted and killed on the spot.

A case of unnatural death has been registered, and further investigation is under way. Villagers and family members have alleged negligence on the part of the Bescom officials, claiming that several electric lines in the village were not in good condition.

Massive fire engulfs perfume warehouse

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A massive fire broke out at a perfume warehouse due to a suspected electrical short circuiton Sunday afternoon, causing extensive damage to property. No casualties have been reported.

The incident occurred at the warehouse located near Makali on the Nelamangala Road. Eyewitnesses said flames shot up into the sky, accompanied by loud bursting sounds, triggering panic in the surrounding area. Around 40 employees working inside the warehouse managed to escape in time as the fire rapidly engulfed the premises. The blaze was reported to have spread to a nearby AC godown. Vehicles parked inside the warehouse were completely damaged in the fire.

The Fire and Emergency Services personnel rushed to the spot and put out the fire. Thick smoke was billowing from the site for several hours.

The Nelamangala police registered a case.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, FEB. 23
RISE 06:39 SET 18:27
RISE 10:40 SET 23:54

TUESDAY, FEB. 24
RISE 06:38 SET 18:27
RISE 11:34 SET 00:00

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 25
RISE 06:38 SET 18:28
RISE 12:32 SET 00:57

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	30	20
Mysuru	33	20
Bengaluru	32	20

Bengaluru Today
31°C The weather will be dry. Day will be slight warm. Night will be cool and hazy.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
30°C Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm. Night also will be cool.

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THE HINDU
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Cab driver held for misbehaving with woman passenger

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Kempegowda International Airport police arrested a cab driver for harassing a woman passenger.

According to police report, at around 8.06 a.m. on Saturday, a distress call was received via the 112 control room from a woman identified as Priyanshi. Upon completion of the trip to the airport, the driver, identified as Nagesh, allegedly demanded excess amount from the passenger. When Priyanshi objected, the driver allegedly used abusive language and threatened her. Based on a complaint, the police arrested and remanded Nagesh in judicial custody.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
SELECTION OF AGENCY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT AND MEDIA ANALYSIS SERVICES FOR SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites application from the interested parties/Agencies on prescribed application form for the following work

Notice Inviting Application (NIA) No.	G.CPRO/SWR/SASMS/2026
Full Name of Service/Work	Selection of Agency for Social Media Management and Media Analysis Services For South Western Railway (for Two Years)
Appx. Total Cost of Service/Work (Exclusive of GST)	Rs. 2,51,00,000/- (Rs. Two Crore Fifty One Lakh Only) Exclusive of GST - per annum; or Rs. 5,02,00,000/- (Rs. Five Crore Two Lakh only) Exclusive of GST for two years.
Appx Total Cost of Service/Work (with GST)	Rs. 5,92,36,000/- with GST (Rs. Five Crore Ninety Two Lakh and Thirty Six Thousand Only) for two years.
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 4,46,180/- (Rs. Four Lakh Forty Six Thousand One Hundred and Eighty Only)
Cost of Application Form	Rs. 10,000/- + 18% GST = Rs.11,800/- (Non-Refundable) (Rs. Eleven Thousand Eight Hundred only) in cash across the Railway Counter or if downloaded from website - Demand Draft/Pay Order in favor of PFA, South Western Railway, Hubballi. (In case if Application Form is required by Post – Rs. 500/- will be charged extra)
Last Date of downloading Application Form from SWR's official Website/purchase from PR Office	Up to 12.00 hrs. on 16/03/2026
Last Date/Time of submission of Application	Up to 11.00 hrs. 17/03/2026
Date & Time of Opening of Applications	On 17/03/2026 at 11.30 hrs. onwards
Venue for Application Submission and Application opening	CPRO Office, Rail Soudha, GM's Office Building, 4th Floor, Gadag Road, Hubballi, Karnataka – 580020.

Particulars of the Website from where the Application Form Procedure of Selection and Terms & Conditions etc. may be downloaded : www.swr.Indianrailways.gov.in
PUB/918/AAF/PRB/SWR/2025-26 **Chief Public Relation Officer / SWR / Hubballi**
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GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
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COMMISSIONERATE OF TRANSPORT AND ROAD SAFETY,
ANNA SALAI, GUINDY, CHENNAI-32.
E-mail:sta.tn@nic.in | Website: tnsta.gov.in
File No:7210/S4/2025 Dated:23.02.2026
Selection of Vendor for Printing and Issuance of Smart Card based Driving Licences and Vehicle Registration Certificates
The Transport Department, Government of Tamil Nadu invites online tenders from eligible firms/agencies for selection of Vendor for Printing and Issuance of Smart Card based Driving Licences and Vehicle Registration Certificates in Tamil Nadu, in accordance with G.O.(Ms) No.24, Home (Transport-VII) Department, dated 19.01.2026 and the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Transparency in Tenders Act, 1998 and Rules, 2000. Interested bidders may submit their bids online through **https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app.**
Last date for submission is **25.03.2026, 5.00P.M.**
TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER, GUINDY, CHENNAI -32
DIPR/1304/TENDER/2026

Government of Karnataka
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRICAL INSPECTORATE
Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector, No. 135, 1st and 2nd Floor, 6th Cross Road, Gandhinagar, Bangalore-560009
PUBLIC AWARENESS INFORMATION LIFT SAFETY RULES To be Known!
As per the provisions of The Karnataka Lifts, Escalators and Passenger Conveyors Act, 2012, and (Amendment) Act 2025, The Karnataka Lifts, Escalators and Passenger Conveyors Rule, 2015 and (Amendment) Rules 2017:
* Every owner of the Place intending to install Lift/Escalator/ Passenger Conveyor shall get his Lift /Escalator/ Passenger Conveyor erected and maintained by registered lift company only who is registered with the Department of Electrical Inspectorate.
* Every owner of a place intending to install a Lift/Escalator/ Passenger Conveyor in the State of Karnataka shall obtain erection permission from the authorised office and after installation owner shall obtain the license from the Department of Electrical Inspectorate before using the Lift/Escalator/ Passenger Conveyor.
* Every Lift running license shall be valid for a period of 10 years from the date on which it is granted and every owner of the Lift/Escalator/Passenger Conveyor shall renew the license before the expiry of the period of license.
For more details please visit website: **www.ksei.karnataka.gov.in**
DIPR/CP/5629/Zen/2025-26
Sd/-
Chief Electrical Inspector to Govt Bengaluru

BEFORE THE KARNATAKA APPELLATE TRIBUNAL, BENGALURU
APPEAL No. 445/2017
BETWEEN : M/S. VEDANT PROJECTS & ANR. ...APPELLANTS
AND : JOINT DIRECTOR OF LAND RECORDS & ORS. ...RESPONDENTS
LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DECEASED RESPONDENT NO.15:
1. Smt. Shashikala w/o late H. B. Manjunath
2. Sri. Brijesh s/o late H. B. Manjunath
3. Sri. Deepak s/o late H. B. Manjunath
all residing at behind Satyanarayanaswamy Temple, Police Station Main Road, Hulimavu, Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru - 76.
NOTICE TO THE LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DECEASED RESPONDENT NO.15:
Whereas the Appellants, have instituted an Revenue Appeal No. 445/2017 against Joint Director of Land Records & Others order dated 17.03.2017 passed by the Court of the 1st respondent in Case No. J.Tham.Sa/Boo.U.Ni/Appeal 117/2015-16, and it is pending before the Hon'ble KARNATAKA APPELLATE TRIBUNAL AT BENGALURU (KAT - 1) You i.e. Smt. Shashikala, Sri. Brijesh & Sri. Deepak have been arrayed as Lr's of Deceased Respondent No.15 in the baove appeal and are hereby summoned to appear before this Hon'ble Court in person or through advocate **on 2nd day of March 2026 at 11.00 A.M.** Take note that in default of your appearance on that day and the time above mentioned, you shall be placed Ex-parte and the case will be heard and determined in your absence.
Given under my hand and seal of the Court on 14th day of February 2026.
BY ORDER THE COURT,
ಸಹಾಯಕ ನಿಬಂಧಕರು, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಮೇಲ್ಮನವಿ ನ್ಯಾಯಾಧಿಕರಣ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು.
ADVOCATE FOR APPELLANTS
Siddharth Suman, Advocate
No. 206, 80 Feet Road, 6th Cross, RMV 2nd Stage, 2nd Block, Bangalore - 560 094.

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India
UNION BANK OF INDIA
(A Government of India Undertaking)
Regional Office : 2254, Kousalya, 3rd Floor, Vinoba Road, Mysuru-570005
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured Creditor, the symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised officer of **Union Bank of India** (secured Creditor) will be sold on **"As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is basis"** on the date mentioned below, for recovery of dues as mentioned hereunder to Union bank of India from the below mentioned Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price and the Earnest Money Deposit are also mentioned hereunder.
Kanakapura M G Road Branch, Opp. Govt Maternity Hospital, Main Road, Kanakapura - 562117 Ph: 8310762328, Mail Id: Ubin0911747@unionbankofindia.bank.in
Name And Address Of the Borrower, Co-application And Guarantor :
1) Mr. Umashankar S/o Sambolinge Gowda, Ward No-18, Basaweshwarnagar, Kanakpura Town, Ramanagar District, Karnataka-562117.
2) Ms. Sunitha S, Ward No-18, Basaweshwarnagar, Kanakpura Town, Ramanagar District, Karnataka-562117
Amount due : Rs. 12,75,618-00 as on 31-01-2026 with further interest, cost & expenses
Description of immovable secured assets to be Sold : All The Part And Parcel Of Land And Building In The Name Of **Ms. Sunitha S,** Property Bearing Old No. 4771/4390/13, 5443/4771, 5976/5443, New No. 5976/E/5443/E,ward No.18 Basaveshwara Nagara, Kanakapura Town, Ramanagara – 562117, **Measuring East - West : 20 Feet, North - South : 50 feet, Total 1000 Square feet, Bounded On The East:** House Of Huliraiah, **West:** House Of Kenchappa, **North:** House Of Gowramma, **South:** Municipal Road.
Reserve Price : Rs. 34,42,500-00 (Rupees Thirty Four Lakhs Forty Two Thousand Five Hundred only)
Earnest Money to Be Deposited : Rs. 3,44,250-00 (Rupees Three lakhs Forty Four Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty only).
Date and time of E-Auction : Date: 27-03-2026 From 12.00 pm to 5.00 PM (with 10 min unlimited auto extensions)
Last date for submission of EMD : On or before the commencement of e-Auction.
E-auction website- https://baanknet.com
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale and registration and login and bidding rules visit : please refer to the link provided : https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/auction-property/view-auction-property.aspx and www.unionbankofindia.co.in
Date : 23-02-2026
Place : Mysuru
Sd/- Authorised Officer
Union Bank of India.

Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division, Solapur.
Budgetary Offer: Notice 01 Dt: 07/01/2026
e-mail eemdsolapur@gmail.com
The Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division, (Water Resources Department) Solapur is inviting Budgetary offer of Design, Manufacure, Test, Supply, Transport with all Loading and Unloading. Storing, Erection, Testing and Commissioning, operation & maintannce for 03 years of Pumping Machinery 04 No's X 1770 HP with allied electro-Mechanical equipments as detailed for Krishna Marathwada LIS scheme 2 stage 6, Ramadara to Ekurga, Tal-Tuljapur, Dist. Dharashiv (Maharashtra). The intended Bidder may submit his Offer by e-mail or in the form of Hard Copy on given respective address,
The Offer shall reach or receivable within 10 Days from the date of Publication. The details of the total work to be carried out is available on below mentioned link.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Approx. Cost	Remark
1	Budgetary Offer are invited from the reputed, Manufacturer for the Design, Manufacure, Test, Supply, Transport with all Loading and Unloading, Storing, Erection, Testing and Commissioning operation & maintanace for 03 years of Pumping Machinery 04 No's X 1770 HP with allied electro-Mechanical equipments as detailed for Krishna Marathwada LIS scheme 2 stage 6, RAmadara to Ekurga, Tal-Tuljapur, Dist.-Dharashiv (Maharashtra), with allied electro-Mechanical Equipments. The details of work to be carried out is mentioned on Water Resources Department, Gov. of Maharashtra by visiting the Link below - **https://wrd.maharashtra.gov.in/Upload/PDF/Budgetory%20Notice%200 1%202026.pdf**	Rs.	Reputed Manufacurer

No. EE/M.D.Solapur/TS 3/BO/Sina Madha LIS/477/2026
Date: 18/02/2026
DGIPR/2025-2026/6057
Sd/-
Dy Executive Engineer
Mechanical Division, Solapur

How proteins are being tweaked to be quantum sensors inside the body

Most existing quantum sensors are made from solid materials such as diamond, which are difficult to place inside cells.; however, cells can produce proteins naturally, with the correct genetic instructions, and they can also be fused to other proteins, allowing researchers to position them at precise locations inside a body

Manjeera Gowravaram

For decades, fluorescent proteins have been among the most powerful tools in biology. They glow when illuminated, allowing scientists to see where molecules are inside cells and how they move. From tracking cancer cells to mapping neural circuits, these luminous markers transformed the life sciences, work recognised with a Nobel Prize in 2008.

Now, two major studies published in *Nature* suggest that fluorescent proteins can do more than glow. Certain fluorescent proteins can be modified to detect magnetic fields and radio waves from inside living cells. In effect they behave as quantum sensors, devices whose operation depends on the behaviour of electrons at the smallest scales.

Until recently, quantum technologies were confined to ultra-cold laboratories filled with specialised equipment. Biology by contrast has been viewed as an unlikely home for quantum effects. Living cells are warm, crowded, and constantly in motion – conditions thought to destroy fragile quantum states.

The new results challenge that assumption, opening a path towards genetically encoded quantum sensors and a new class of hybrid quantum-biological technologies.

Hidden sensitivity

When a fluorescent protein absorbs light, one of its electrons is pushed into a higher-energy state. Usually, the electron quickly returns to its original state and releases energy as light. That simple process is what makes the protein glow.

In some proteins, however, this journey is more complicated. The excited electron can briefly interact with a nearby molecule inside the protein, forming what scientists call a radical pair, two molecules that each carry an unpaired electron.

For a short time, the spins of these electrons are linked. The outcome of their interaction depends on weak magnetic influences around them. Even weak magnetic fields can change how the pair behaves, which in turn alters how much light the protein emits.

Chemists have known about this effect for decades, and it has been proposed as a possible explanation for how some animals sense Earth's magnetic field. What had been missing was a way to reliably harness this phenomenon inside living cells.

Protein sensors

Researchers at the University of Chicago's Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering focused on a variant of enhanced yellow fluorescent protein (EYFP), a close relative of green fluorescent protein. They discovered that EYFP possesses a metastable triplet state – a temporary electronic configuration in which an electron's magnetic spin can be isolated and controlled.

Using carefully timed laser pulses, the team initialised the spin state of EYFP, manipulated it with microwave fields, and read it out optically, completing the full sequence required of a qubit.

They also detected optically driven magnetic resonance signals from EYFP inside living cells. These effects appeared in human kidney cells at low temperature and in *Escherichia coli* bacteria even at room temperature, showing that the protein's quantum behaviour survives in biology's noisy environment.

A second research group at the University of Oxford took a different approach. Working with a plant light-sensing protein, they used genetic engineering to create a family of magneto-sensitive fluorescent proteins called MagLOV. Through repeated rounds of mutation and selection, they produced versions with stronger and more stable magnetic responses.

The studies demonstrate that proteins can be programmed through DNA to act as quantum sensors and point to a future in which these sensors reshape how scientists probe living systems enabling nanoscale measurements

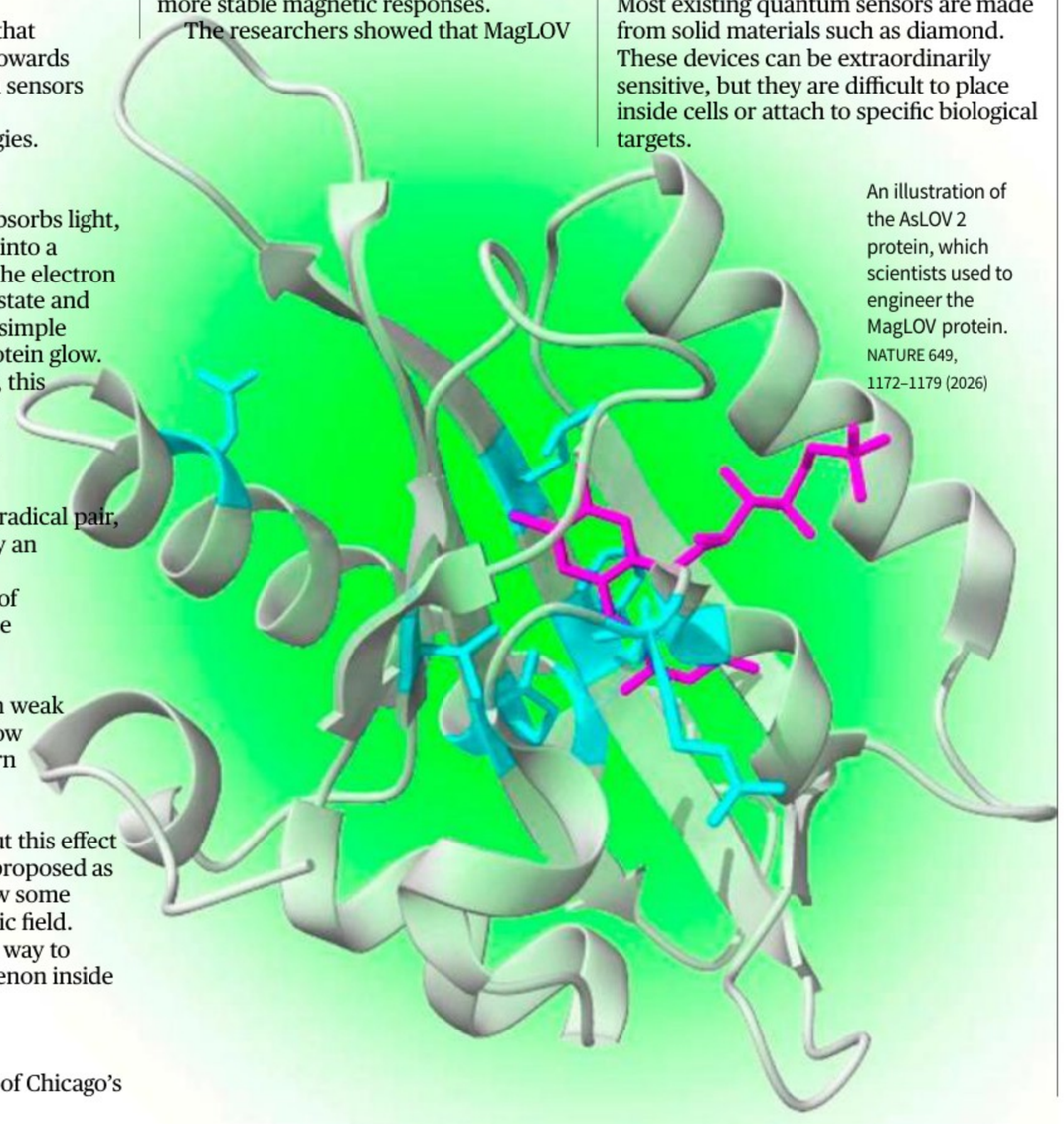
The researchers showed that MagLOV proteins exhibit optically detected magnetic resonance in living bacterial cells at room temperature. In other words, radio waves at specific frequencies can predictably change fluorescence, directly revealing electron-spin behaviour.

Historically, biological candidates for quantum sensors were limited to purified, in-vitro systems, showed weak responses, or degraded quickly under light exposure. The engineered MagLOV proteins overcome many of these obstacles by combining stability, sensitivity, and genetic compatibility.

Together, the studies demonstrate that proteins can be programmed through DNA to act as quantum sensors.

Why inside cells matters

Most existing quantum sensors are made from solid materials such as diamond. These devices can be extraordinarily sensitive, but they are difficult to place inside cells or attach to specific biological targets.



An illustration of the AsLOV 2 protein, which scientists used to engineer the MagLOV protein. NATURE 649, 1172–1179 (2026)

Protein sensors are fundamentally different. Cells can produce them naturally once given the correct genetic instructions. The sensors can also be fused to other proteins, allowing researchers to position them at precise locations inside the cell.

This matters because many crucial biological processes involve subtle magnetic or electronic effects, including enzyme reactions with metal atoms, formation of short-lived free radicals, and electron transfer during respiration and photosynthesis.

Until now, studying these phenomena inside living cells has been nearly impossible. Protein-based quantum sensors offer a potential solution.

More than detection

The MagLOV researchers also showed that magnetic modulation can improve conventional fluorescence imaging. By switching a magnetic field on and off, they separated the MagLOV signal from background fluorescence and cellular autofluorescence. This technique, known as lock-in detection, enhances weak signals in noisy environments.

They further demonstrated a form of spatial localization based on magnetic resonance. Using magnetic-field gradients, they could determine the position of MagLOV-expressing cells within a three-dimensional sample, even when light scattering would normally blur the image.

The approach resembles some principles of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), but uses genetically encoded fluorescent proteins as the signal source.

New ways of seeing

These studies point to a future in which genetically encodable quantum sensors reshape how scientists probe living systems. As sensitivities improve, protein-based qubits and magnetic-resonance probes could enable nanoscale measurements of magnetic fields, electric fields, temperature, and chemical environments directly inside cells.

Such sensors might track protein shape changes, monitor biochemical reactions in real time, or reveal how drugs bind to their targets with unprecedented precision.

Important challenges remain, though. Protein-based quantum sensors are currently less sensitive than solid-state devices, coherence times are shorter, and photobleaching remains a concern. Yet fluorescent proteins themselves took decades to become routine tools, and similar improvement could steadily close the gap.

(Manjeera Gowravaram has a Ph.D. in RNA biochemistry and works as a freelance science writer. gmanjeera@gmail.com)

THE GIST

- Two major studies published in *Nature* suggest that fluorescent proteins can detect magnetic fields and radio waves from inside living cells. In effect they behave as quantum sensors
- The new results open a path towards genetically encoded quantum sensors and a new class of hybrid quantum-biological technologies
- Scientists found that engineered proteins could be sensors in *Escherichia coli* bacteria even at room temperature, showing that their quantum behaviour could survive a noisy environment
- Such sensors might track protein shape changes, monitor biochemical reactions in real time, or reveal how drugs bind to their targets with unprecedented precision

BIG SHOT

A closeup of a small section of the Helix Nebula, an expanding shell of gas and dust, by the James Webb Space Telescope. Winds of hot gas stream upwards from the bottom, like thin liquid blown up a sheet of glass. NASA, ESA, CSA, STSCI

QUESTION CORNER

Smoke vortex

Q: Why does wildfire smoke swirl only one way in the air?

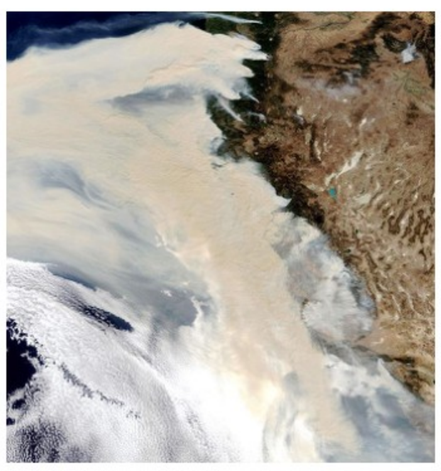
A: Sometimes wildfire smoke in the stratosphere collects into a compact bubble of smoke that spins in a coherent vortex, clockwise in the northern hemisphere and counter-clockwise in the southern hemisphere.

Two new studies, published in *Weather and Climate Dynamics* and presented at a recent meeting of the American Meteorological Society, have found why. The smoke particles absorb sunlight and warm the air around them. That makes the air buoyant, and it rises through the smoky core, pushing the clump of smoke particles up over time.

Earth's atmosphere is rotating and has many layers. If you warmed one patch of stratospheric air and kept the warming at the same height, the air just above will start swirling one way and the air just below, the other way.

Because the smoke particles are rising, the heating pattern also moves up with the smoke. This matters because the atmosphere's 'push' to make the air rotate also moves upwards. As the warm core passes through a layer, it will briefly nudge the air into rotating one way. Once it has moved on, the later push in that same layer will undo much of the earlier change. As a result the most coherent rotation is wrapped around the smoke bubble itself, like a collar that travels upwards with it.

The rotating bubble also acts like a container, keeping the warmer smoke concentrated near its centre, rather than mixing with the surroundings, and allowing it to keep rising.



Wildfire smoke in the northeast Pacific Ocean, September 2020. NASA

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

Handrail barricades installed at more high-footfall metro stations

This follows several distressing incidents of individuals attempting to access the tracks, with some cases ending in fatalities

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (BMRCL) has initiated the installation of handrail barricades along platforms at several busy metro stations, extending the safety measure beyond the already equipped interchange hubs at Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Station, Majestic and R.V. Road.

The handrail barricades have recently been installed at Indiranagar, K.R. Pura and Benniganahalli stations, all of which witness substantial daily footfall.

Handrail barricades seen at M.G. Road Metro Station in Bengaluru on Sunday, installed as part of the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd.'s effort to enhance commuter safety. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

Such barricades have recently been installed at Indiranagar, K.R. Pura and Benniganahalli stations

Commuter safety

The decision follows apprehensions that the present open-platform layout does not sufficiently deter passengers from accidentally stepping or falling onto the tracks.

These locations were prioritised due to heavy commuter movement and interchange traffic between corridors, according to officials.

A senior BMRCL official said, "The installation of the handrail barricades at identified high-footfall stations is part of our ongoing efforts to enhance commuter safety. These railings are intended to guide passenger movement and reduce the risk of track intrusions. We are continuously assessing station-specific requirements and implementing suitable measures wherever necessary."

Call for stronger infra

This comes in the backdrop of several distressing incidents in which individuals attempted to access the tracks, with some cases ending in fatalities.

Such episodes have intensified calls for stronger protective infrastructure at the metro stations.

Platform Screen Doors

Commuters have also been persistently advocating for the introduction of Platform Screen Doors (PSDs) across the entire Namma Metro network, arguing that the rapidly expanding ridership makes advanced safety systems indispensable.

Officials estimate that average daily patronage has reached nearly 10 lakh passengers, resulting in crowded platforms during peak hours.

Savitha Rao, a regular commuter from Jayanagar, welcomed the installation of barricades but said more comprehensive measures were necessary. "It is a positive step that the BMRCL has added barriers at some stations, but ideally they should be present everywhere. During peak hours, platforms are packed and even waiting in a queue feels risky. The PSDs must become a mandatory feature in all future metro corridors before they are opened to commuters," she said.

In February 2024, the BMRCL introduced metal railings along select sections of interchange platforms to restrict direct access to the tracks.

Since then, the corporation has been evaluating their impact, particularly at stations with high passenger volumes.

While retrofitting the PSDs on existing corridors poses challenges, the officials confirmed that the technology was being incorporated into upcoming expansion projects.

Criticism

However, the absence of the PSDs on the older Purple and Green Lines, developed under Phase 1, continues to draw criticism. Sources said that during the initial stages of the metro project, budgetary limitations necessitated a focus on essential civil and operational infrastructure, leaving little scope for costly safety additions like the PSDs.

Retrofitting such systems now, particularly at large and complex hubs like Majestic, would require prolonged service disruptions, the officials noted.

"In the early years, priority was given to increasing train frequency to as low as three-minute intervals and strengthening on-ground crowd management with additional personnel. The emphasis on the PSDs has gained momentum only in recent years, especially for underground segments under Phase 2," an official added.

BU's PhD notification opposed by faculty, student bodies

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes Teachers' Association of Bangalore University and the Karnataka Students-Researchers' Federation for Social and Educational Rights have opposed the recent notification issued by the university for PhD admission under internal reservation.

They have urged the university to drop the internal reservation and re-notify it as the case is still pending in the Karnataka High Court.

The High Court had stayed recruitment based on the Karnataka government's Scheduled Caste Internal Reservation Order. The Karnataka Scheduled Castes (Sub-classification) Bill 2025 is yet to be signed by the Governor of Karnataka. As a result, they have argued that the PhD notification issued by the university is in violation of the High Court order.

In the internal reservation order of the government, which has been stayed by the court, it has been directed to provide facilities to SC categories A, B, and C in the ratio of 6:6:5.

Based on this ratio, out of the 48 seats reserved for SC candidates, 17 seats each should be reserved for Category A and B and 14 for Category C. However, the organisations have complained that in this notification, 16 seats have been reserved for all three categories.

"Under the internal reservation, one seat has been cut from Category A and B for PhD admission and two seats have been added to Category C. Therefore, since the court has issued a stay order, the internal reservation in the PhD notification should be removed and a modified notification should be issued. If not, we will wage a legal battle," they warned.

The university has invited applications for PhD admission after many years and this has put a question mark over its notification.

Jayakar S.M., Vice-Chancellor of the university said, "The PhD notification has been issued in accordance with the government orders after discussing with the Social Welfare Department and legal experts. Experts said that the High Court has issued a stay order only regarding the issue of recruitment under internal reservation. Therefore, we will proceed as per the High Court's order and the government's instructions in this matter."

Undertrial prisoner attacks 6 inmates on instruction of another inmate

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Investigations into a recent case where an undertrial prisoner attempted to assault six other inmates of the Parappana Agrahara Central Prison have revealed that the assailant carried out the attempt on the instructions of another inmate in return for money. A jail staffer, Hanumanthappa Hadapada was injured when he tried to prevent the attack.

In his complaint, Hadapada said the incident occurred on February 16, when he was escorting the six inmates as part of routine movement. He said he saw the accused, Waseem Pasha, near the prison hospital gate. Suddenly, the undertrial attempted to assault the inmates - Syed Mubarak, Nawaz Sharif, Syed Ismail, Salman Khan, Mohammed Ali and Umez Mubarak - with a nail. Hadapada said when he tried to restrain the accused, he assaulted him instead. Soon, other jail staffers rushed to the spot and pinned Pasha down.

During interrogation, he reportedly claimed that he was told by another inmate Rizorio to attack the inmates and was promised money in return. The police have registered a case.

Fresh FIR against Snehamayi Krishna

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Hours after being detained and questioned by the Central Crime Branch (CCB) for allegedly circulating fabricated documents and manipulated content on social media, RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna is facing yet another criminal case – this time at the Basaveshwara Nagar Police Station.

Krishna was earlier questioned and later released on Saturday over allegations that he used his social media account to circulate fabricated documents, edited photographs and manipulated audio clips targeting former MUDA Commissioner D.B. Natesh.

In the latest development, a fresh FIR has been registered against Krishna and former Bengaluru University professor Mylarappa B.C. following a complaint by Pavithra B.N.

The FIR was registered on February 21.

According to the complaint, dated December 6, 2025, the complainant stated that on the evening of December 5, she received a letter at her residence. The letter allegedly contained defamatory statements about her late husband and her advocate Raghu, and referred to a complaint purportedly filed at the Mahalakshmipuram Police Station seeking reinvestigation into her husband's death. She claimed the letter was sent by Krishna.

The complainant further alleged that, along with the letter, a threatening note was enclosed, pressuring her to withdraw cases filed against Mylarappa. The letter reportedly contained a mobile number and allegedly included threats and abusive language.

She stated that the actions of the accused have caused distress to her and adversely affected her children's education, disturbed the peace at her residence and created fear for her safety.

Based on the complaint, the police initially registered an NCR (No. 571/ 2025).

Subsequently, after obtaining permission from the 24th ACMM Court, a formal FIR was registered against Krishna and Mylarappa for criminal intimidation and intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace.

Further investigation is under way.

In October last year, the complainant had filed a case against Mylarappa, accusing him of stalking and harassment.

The Hindu Group's annual realty expo Living Spaces 2026 concludes

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Living Spaces 2026, The Hindu Group's two-day annual realty expo, which concluded on Sunday here, saw an overwhelming response, marking a footfall of over 1,500 potential home buyers.

According to realty firms that participated in the expo, this edition of Living Spaces attracted a large number of customers who are keen to make quick and sizeable investments as home prices are currently on the rise. Some developers also reported home sales at the expo.

"Most visitors were looking for premium to luxury homes, and were not just casually checking out what's available," said a spokesperson from one of the realty firms.

Visitors at the real estate expo in Bengaluru. K. MURALI KUMAR

Living Spaces 2026 brought together leading real estate developers, investors, banks, financial institutions, turnkey builders, and construction material providers to offer prospective home buyers a holistic connection to all ecosystem players. The expo featured a wide range of offerings, including apartments, plots, villas, farmland, and housing loan facilities from various banks, including IDBI. The expo was presented by Vaishnavi Group and jointly powered by Bangalore Development Authority and ORCHIDS The International School.

The expo was also held in association with DS Max and SBR Group. Gold sponsors included Sapthagiri, Assetz, Repco Bank, Living Walls, Sudharshan Pipes, Elegant Builders, Abhee Ventures, A&A Realty (Mysore), Amberstone, Telecom Housing, Sowparnika, A to Z Properties, KNS Infra, IDBI Bank, Alliance Square (Mysore), Sentient, Rajeshwari Ashirwad, Mogg's, Nischitha, Habulus, among others. Cothas Coffee was the beverage partner, while Empire Hotel was the hospitality partner.

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ISSN 0971 - 751X

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The record high cargo handled by the Vizag port in 327 days

80 in million tonnes. This marks the Vishakapatnam port's fastest achievement in its 92-year history. VPA Chairperson M. Angamuthu said the port crossed the 80-million-tonne mark on February 21, setting a new benchmark in operational performance. PTI

Power investments in Bihar, Jharkhand reviewed by Adani

40,000 in ₹ crore. Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani visited sites in Jharkhand and Bihar, reviewing major power investments to the tune of over ₹40,000 crore, which underscore the company's presence in eastern India. PTI

Illegal properties to be demolished in anti-encroachment drive

1,489 The Rajkot Municipal Corporation, with the support of the police, will tear down 1,489 properties along the banks of the Aji River and on a municipal town planning road in Jangleshwar, Municipal Commissioner Tushar Sumera said. PTI

The estimated Indian tourist footfall to Israel by 2027

69,000 Israel, which saw a double crisis of COVID-19 and the war, is expecting to recover and reach the 2019 level of around 69,000 visitors from India by 2027, a senior representative of the Israel Ministry of Tourism said. PTI

Magnitude of the earthquake that hit Nepal's Koshi province

4.1 A mild tremor was felt in Nepal's Koshi province on Sunday morning. The earthquake was recorded with its epicentre located at Ritak area of Sankhuwasabha district at 7:31 am. There was no immediate report of any damage. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why are apple traders in J&K worried?

Why are apple producers concerned about the trade deals with the U.S. and the EU? Why are countries in the West able to produce a better yield of apples? What about controlled-atmosphere cold storage prices? Why are party leaders urging the Union government to re-evaluate the deal?

EXPLAINER

Peerzada Ashiq

The story so far:

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Leader of the Opposition in J&K Mehbooba Mufti have termed the India-U.S. trade deal as a death knell for the horticulture sector, especially for apple production in Kashmir. The criticism has grown shriller in the backdrop of India's decision to reduce basic customs duty on apples imported from the U.S. from 50% to 25%, even though the Minimum Import Price (MIP) was set at ₹80 per kilogram. Under the new India-European Union trade deal, import duty on fresh fruits was reduced to 20% under a Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) system. Only 50,000 tonnes per year of apples will be allowed from the EU at this reduced duty, to avoid the sudden flooding of Indian markets. However, the deal agrees to increase the quota to 1,00,000 tonnes over the next 10 years.

How important is apple production?

According to the J&K Economic Survey 2025-26, apple production comprises 50% of the total horticulture production of J&K against pear, apricot, peach, plum, cherry, citrus, mango, walnut, almond etc. The horticulture sector produces roughly ₹10,000 crore in revenue and employs about 35 lakh individuals, either directly or indirectly, thereby supporting approximately seven lakh families, the official survey suggested.

In 2024, apple production in J&K stood at 21 lakh metric tonnes. Over 173.07 lakh hectares of land in J&K are under apple orchards. J&K contributes to over 70% of the total apple production in the country.

The apple is the fourth most important fruit crop in India.

Besides J&K, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Nagaland, and Sikkim also produce apples.

Precarious trade: Workers separating rotten apples in Pulwama, Srinagar in 2025. IMRAN NISSAR

Why are there fears?

Kashmir cannot compete with apples produced in Western countries due to their farming practices, favourable government policy and technological intervention. One estimate suggests that orchardists in New Zealand, the U.S., and in the EU on an average operate on 50-plus hectare farms against an average of 0.40 hectares in J&K. Only 7-8 tonnes of apples per hectare can be produced in India, whereas 40-70 tonnes per hectare are produced in countries like the U.S., Iran, New Zealand and China owing to better geography, advanced technology and mechanisation, says Nasir Hamid Khan, former vice-president of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries (KCCI), a pan-Valley traders body. Moreover, Western countries have already introduced AI system technologies for pruning, pollination, harvesting, infield-sorting and bagging.

How will it impact off-season pricing?

Nations in the West have also mastered many popular varieties of apples such as gala apples. India introduced the gala variety only very recently and it is yet to reach its optimum production quality in terms of colour, taste, juice, shape as well as yield. Orchardists in Kashmir fear apples from the West will enter India at cheaper prices and in turn hit controlled-atmosphere cold storage prices the most. With reduced import duty, fresh New Zealand apples will enter Indian markets at cheaper prices, directly undercutting Indian apples stored in cold facilities, says Izhan Javed, a senior member of the J&K Fruits and Vegetables Processing and Integrated Cold Chain Association. Kashmir stores 397.08 lakh metric tonnes of apples in 92 cold storages currently. Local orchardists in Kashmir have invested heavily in cold storage infrastructure. "The trade deals threaten to make these investments economically unviable, endangering the entire post-harvest ecosystem built with public and private capital. The trade deal has the potential to destroy off-season price stability and push farmers back into distress sales," warns Mr. Javed.

What are J&K parties demanding?

J&K parties and traders are urging the Centre to relook the deal and ensure safeguards for apple producers. In J&K, parties are clamouring for a joint strategy to pressure the Centre to exclude apples from the deal. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader and legislator Waheed-ur-Rehmaan Parra has sought an all-party meeting "to devise a collective strategy". "Out of 30 lakh kanals of orchard land, only 30,000 kanals are under high-density cultivation. There is a need to have interest-free loans for farmers under Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) to compete globally," says Mr. Parra.

The PDP also pitched for the expansion of cold storage and controlled-atmosphere storage infrastructure "to prevent distress sales". It demanded the activation of dry port projects in J&K for the smooth ferrying of apples from the Valley to the markets outside.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has also echoed these concerns. He said the trade deal will "spell disaster for the horticulture sector if left unaddressed". Mr. Abdullah says time has come to invest in improving productivity and quality before the market is flooded by cheaper apples. We don't know what the benefits will be in the rest of the country, but we are seeing a loss, Mr. Abdullah warned. He underlined that the deals have paved an "uneven playing field for local orchardists and better-quality imports will dominate the market and the local produce will get devalued".

THE GIST

- According to the J&K Economic Survey 2025-26, apple production comprises 50% of the total horticulture production of J&K against pear, apricot, peach, plum, cherry, citrus, mango, walnut, almond etc.
- Kashmir cannot compete with apples produced in Western countries due to their farming practices, favourable government policy and technological intervention.
- J&K parties and traders are urging the Centre to relook the deal and ensure safeguards for apple producers.

Why did the U.S. drop a core radiation safety rule?

What is the ALARA principle? What has the U.S. Department of Energy said?

K.S. Parthasarathy

The story so far:

The Linear No-Threshold (LNT) model and the ALARA principle have served as the conceptual and operational foundations of the global radiation protection framework for many decades. But, on January 12, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) "eliminated" ALARA from its directives and regulations, departing significantly from longstanding national and international practices.

What is the LNT model?

The LNT model is a risk estimation framework that says any amount of ionising radiation, no matter how small, carries some risk of causing harm, especially cancer. In other words, there is no threshold below which radiation is considered completely risk-free. And the risk increases linearly with dose. ALARA, short for "as low as reasonably achievable", is the operational philosophy of radiation protection. 'Reasonably' is the most important condition. The philosophy balances safety with feasibility, cost, and societal need, and its aim is to improve continuously, including better shielding, administrative procedures, and training. Thus, in practice ALARA aims to reduce unnecessary exposure using engineering controls and encourages a safety culture. Unfortunately, when these principles are misapplied, as they have often been, they create a baggage of woes. The International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) and other stakeholders are realising that modern radiological protection requires a different approach.

Why has the U.S. eliminated ALARA?

"The DOE's decades of nuclear facility operating experience confirms that DOE's mission to foster nuclear innovation and advanced nuclear technologies could be met more effectively if the current radiation framework were reformed," a Department memorandum said in a follow-up to U.S. President Donald Trump's orders. Critics have argued that the shift appears politically motivated and relies on non peer-reviewed internal reports, and risks undermining worker protection, public trust, and regulatory coherence. Indeed, the U.S is now at odds with international bodies such as the ICRP, the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, the World Health Organization, etc. all of which continue to rely on LNT as a basis for radiation protection. No large-scale, high-quality epidemiological or mechanistic evidence has emerged to justify replacing LNT with alternative dose-response models, including hormesis (which says low dose radiation is okay). While hormesis remains biologically plausible, its variability across populations, ethical limitations, and lack of reproducible human data render it unsuitable for regulatory use.

What lies ahead?

The ICRP hasn't shown any indication that the dose limits will be revised. There may be a renewed effort to accept a low dose level below which no regulation is required. However, critics have emphasised the importance of public perception. Even if some experts believe higher dose thresholds could be justified scientifically, the optics of abandoning ALARA and LNT are problematic. For those living near nuclear facilities, the change may look like a lowering of safety standards rather than a refinement of scientific assumptions. Without broad scientific consensus, transparent communication, and meaningful public engagement, critics fear that the policy shift will deepen mistrust, and fuel opposition to nuclear projects and existing and future facilities.

Possible evidence of cancer and non-cancer effects at low doses have also appeared in more recent studies, such as the ongoing 'Million Person Study'. Another study of nearly a million young individuals revealed that a few of them may suffer blood related cancers at very low doses (*Nature Medicine*, 2023). One expects the ICRP will take note of such work.

India has been at the forefront of complying with internationally accepted radiation protection practices and must continue to do so.

K.S. Parthasarathy is former secretary, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board.

THE GIST

- The LNT model is a risk estimation framework that says any amount of ionising radiation, no matter how small, carries some risk of causing harm, especially cancer. ALARA, short for "as low as reasonably achievable", is the operational philosophy of radiation protection.
- On January 12, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) "eliminated" ALARA from its directives and regulations.
- Even if some experts believe higher dose thresholds could be justified scientifically, the optics of abandoning ALARA and LNT are problematic.

Congress leadership tussle gains traction again

Satish Jarkiholi says Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has informed him that the high command has come to a conclusion on leadership; Mahadevappa urges for a Dalit Chief Minister

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU/BELAGAVI

After the crescendo over a leadership change and a purported 'November Revolution' in the Congress had died down, public discussion over leadership has regained traction in the ruling party.

While Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's social media posts on Saturday about him being targeted garnered political interest, demand for a Dalit Chief Minister has regained momentum.

On Sunday, Social Welfare Minister H.C. Mahadevappa urged the Congress high command and Mr. Siddaramaiah to take a decision to appoint a suitable Dalit leader as the Chief Minister. He said that there was a considerably large Dalit population in the State, which had stood by the Congress. "Currently, Mr. Siddaramaiah is the Chief Minister and a Dalit Chief Minister has to happen. When discussions are happening around leadership, this (Dalit Chief Minister issue) has come up," he told reporters.

His comments came on the day that the Chief Minister made another statement on the possibility of a Vokkaliga or a Dalit leader becoming Chief Minister only through the Congress.

Over the last fortnight, the leadership issue has again come up with the Chief Minister's son Yathindra Siddaramaiah and Dr. Mahadevappa making statements in favour of Mr. Siddaramaiah's continuation, even as legislators Iqbal Hussain, H.C. Balakrishna, and Shivaganga Basavaraj have supported Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar.

A file photo of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Social Welfare Minister H.C. Mahadevappa.

Overseas trip

An overseas trip of over two dozen Congress legislators is also being seen as an effort from the Chief Minister's camp to display their strength amid the leadership struggle.

Meanwhile, Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi claimed that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge told him that the high command had come to a conclusion on the leadership issue and it would be implemented at an appropriate time. The Valmiki community leader, who is believed to be angling for the KPCC president's post, was accompanied by former Minister K.N. Rajanna, another Valmiki leader, and several legislators from North Karnataka.

On Sunday, Mr. Jarkiholi, however, told reporters in Belagavi: "This trip was not in support of any individual leader. We have not heard anything about mid-term changes. The rest is left to the party high command. We have no idea about changes to the State leadership after the Budget. We have told our senior leaders to end the confusion as it could damage the party's prospects in the coming elections."

Further, he said: "Mr. Kharge has given us a clear signal that the issue will be resolved. We do not know how it will be resolved. But it will surely be resolved soon."

'Keep quiet'

Meanwhile, Mr. Shivakumar said: "I request all my supporters to keep quiet. They should not make any statement about the leadership change in Karnataka. If leaders like Mr. Hussain and Mr. Basavaraj keep their mouths shut, it will be good for me. I urge them to keep their mouths shut."

Speaking to reporters in Karwar over speculation of Ministers going to Delhi, he said: "The visit of some Ministers and party legislators to Delhi may be for work related to their departments. All of those who visited Delhi are our own people. Let us see what the trips were for and what are their implications."

Show generosity by vacating post: HDK

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Hitting back at Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over his comments on the Janata Dal (Secular) leadership and Vokkaliga politics, Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy on Sunday suggested that the time was ripe for him to shower love on Vokkaligas by vacating his post.

"I welcome the Congress's generosity to the Vokkaliga community. If the Congress can make a Vokkaliga the Chief Minister, should you also not show the same generosity? Show the generosity by publicly speaking about the agreement you had before becoming the Chief Minister in the second term. Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, K.C. Venugopal, and Randeep Singh Surjewala must have understood your concept of social justice and love for Vokkaligas by now," he retorted in a statement. "The very political strength and stature you enjoy today were enabled by former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda. Had he chosen to prioritise family or caste, you would not have become Finance Minister, perhaps not even the head of a corporation."

Stating that the Chief Minister had used names of 13 Vokkaliga leaders for his political selfishness, Mr. Kumaraswamy asked if they did not enjoy power owing to Mr. Gowda's efforts. "They all enjoyed power due to the sacrifices of Mr. Gowda and grew up before crossing over the fence."

He also accused Mr. Siddaramaiah of backstabbing former Chief Minister S.M. Krishna, snatching the Leader of the Opposition's post from current Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, and finishing off the chances of another Dalit leader G. Parameshwara.

The Union Minister said: "It is embarrassing that the person who trampled upon social justice speaks on it repeatedly. How long will you lie? If you were to be a genuine representative of AHINDA, you would have not dragged your caste at a sensitive time."

CM lists out Vokkaligas in Congress capable of providing leadership to community

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amid a tussle over leadership with Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said that the Congress is the only party that can provide opportunities to Vokkaligas and Dalits to become Chief Ministers in the future.

List of leaders

Along with Mr. Shivakumar, he listed out T.B. Jayachandra, Kimmane Ratnakar, M. Krishnappa, Krishna Byre Gowda, and K. Venkatesh as those in the Congress capable of providing leadership to the community, even as he listed out Vokkaliga leaders, who distanced themselves from former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's leadership in the Janata Parivar.

"Those who are capable of providing leadership to the Vokkaliga community are in the Congress and if anyone from the community has to become a Vokkaliga Chief Minister beyond Mr. Gowda's family, it will be from the Congress," he said in a statement.

The Chief Minister's statement came in response to criticism from the JD(S) and BJP leaders over his social media posts on Saturday.

Union Heavy Industries and Steel Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy had accused Mr. Siddaramaiah of invoking his caste to save his chair in response to the Chief Minister's posts in which he claimed that he was being targeted owing to his caste and social background.

In Saturday's posts, the Chief Minister not only said that he would carry forward the fight against attempts to finish him, but also that he was not a coward to run away from the battlefield.

"It is the Congress that identified and nurtured Vokkaliga leadership from Kengal Hanumanthaiah to S.M. Krishna. The Congress is nurturing Vokkaliga leaders, who were cheated by Mr. Gowda," he said in the statement.

Mr. Siddaramaiah accused Mr. Gowda and Mr. Kumaraswamy of using Vokkaligas to further their family interests. "There is a long list of Vokkaliga leaders in the Congress. How many Vokkaliga leaders are there in the JD(S)?"

Mr. Siddaramaiah said that the Congress had Dalit leaders who are capable of becoming Chief Minister based on merit.

From Page One

State govt. plans curbs on phone use for children under 16

A file photo of a boy using a mobile phone. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Recently, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao also expressed concern over mental and physical problems among the youth due to overexposure to social media. He said he would write to the Union Health Minister seeking a law on digital de-addiction.

Government sources said a decision was yet to be taken and the modalities would be worked out in case the government decided to impose restrictions.

MLA remanded in judicial custody

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

BJP MLA for Shirahatti Chandru Lamani, who was arrested by the Lokayukta Police while allegedly taking a bribe from a contractor in Gadag district on Saturday, was brought to Bengaluru on Sunday. He was produced before the judge of the Special Court of Magistrate for criminal cases against former and present MPs and MLAs, at his residence. He was remanded in judicial custody till March 3.

Dr. Lamani was subsequently shifted to Parappana Agrahara Central Prison. His personal assistant, Manjunath Valmiki, and an associate, Guru Naik, were also produced before the judge.

CORRIDORS OF POWER

Marry a farmer, get an allowance?

In what could potentially become Karnataka's most unexpected policy debate of the season, MLA for Kunigal H.D. Ranganath has written to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah *(pictured)* to announce a special allowance for women who marry farmers living in villages.

In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister on February 18, the legislator expressed concern over what he described as a growing "marriage crisis" in rural areas, particularly in Kunigal constituency. According to him, several young men who are engaged in agriculture and residing in villages are finding it difficult to get married, as many prospective brides are reportedly reluctant to move to rural areas.

What is called "bride crisis" faced by farmers has often been taken up by politicians in Karnataka, with the Janata Dal (Secular) announcing an incentive of ₹2 lakh to women marrying sons of farmers in the State in its manifesto released ahead of the 2023 Assembly elections.

In his letter, Mr. Ranganath pointed out that despite being hardworking, self-reliant, and rooted in farming, many of these men are crossing 30 years without finding life partners. He suggested that offering a special financial allowance and a form of social recognition to women who choose to marry such farmers could help bridge the rural-urban marital divide.

While some may call it push for creative policymaking, others say it shines the light on a genuine social issue – migration from villages to cities and the declining appeal of agriculture as a lifestyle choice.

Whether the proposal turns into a full-fledged scheme or remains a conversation starter, one thing is certain: Karnataka's next Assembly session might just feature a debate on love, livelihoods, and the economics of matrimony. For now, rural bachelors in Kunigal may be watching the Vidhana Soudha proceedings a little more closely than usual.

Industry leaders unite

Industry leaders in coastal Karnataka have united for the first time to counter what they call an attempt by a Minister to "project the region in poor light" on the grounds of communal tensions.

They took to social media and reacted sharply to IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge's *(pictured)* remarks in Bengaluru on February 15 that the coastal area could not realise its full economic potential because of negative investment climate owing to communal tensions and religious narratives.

A joint statement by industry leaders said that over 40 new IT companies set up operations in coastal region in the last two years, and it added 8,000-plus new IT jobs. Today, the tech ecosystem in the coastal region includes over 400 startups, 250-plus technology companies and around 25,000 professionals, reflecting sustained investor trust. In this period, three home-grown tech firms were acquired, totalling around $250 million in investment in the region, they said.

Mangaluru hosts leading professional education colleges that attract thousands of students from across India and abroad, a testament to the region's enduring social harmony, the leaders said.

The joint statement was issued by CII, Coastal Karnataka Tourism Development Council, CREDAI, Silicon Beach Programme (the moniker used by industry leaders to identify the region), and The Indus Entrepreneurs and others.

Citing statistics, Home Minister G. Parameshwara said in Mangaluru on February 18 that situation in coastal region is now congenial for growth and development.

Imran Gowhar
Raviprasad Kamila

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

BRAHMASHRI SHRI Subramania Sastrigal (93) ex Principal, Rajaveda Kavya Patasala Kumbakonam, passed away peacefully and cremated on 22-02-2026. Dasahasthu on 03/03/26 at 52/12-1, Kasiraman street, Kumbakonam. Smt. Jayalakshmi, Sri S Ganesan -CUB & Smt Bhuvana , Sri S Sriram- USA & Smt Shuba, Sri T R Vasudevan & Smt Bhooma and Sri S.Swaminathan & Smt Uma. Grand son- Pranav and Granddaughters Priya, Aparna, Lavanya & Niranjana. Ph: 9080000180

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CMC Vellore, Chittoor Campus seeks experienced and reputed **Interior Contractors for the Interior Finishing & Fit-out works of its 400-bedded Teaching Hospital (7,32,904 sq.ft.) under construction located at 190 Ramapuram, 189 Kothapalli Post, Gudipala Mandal, Chittoor- 517132, Andhra Pradesh.**
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Note: Contractor firms that have already expressed their interest in response to the previous advertisement need not apply.

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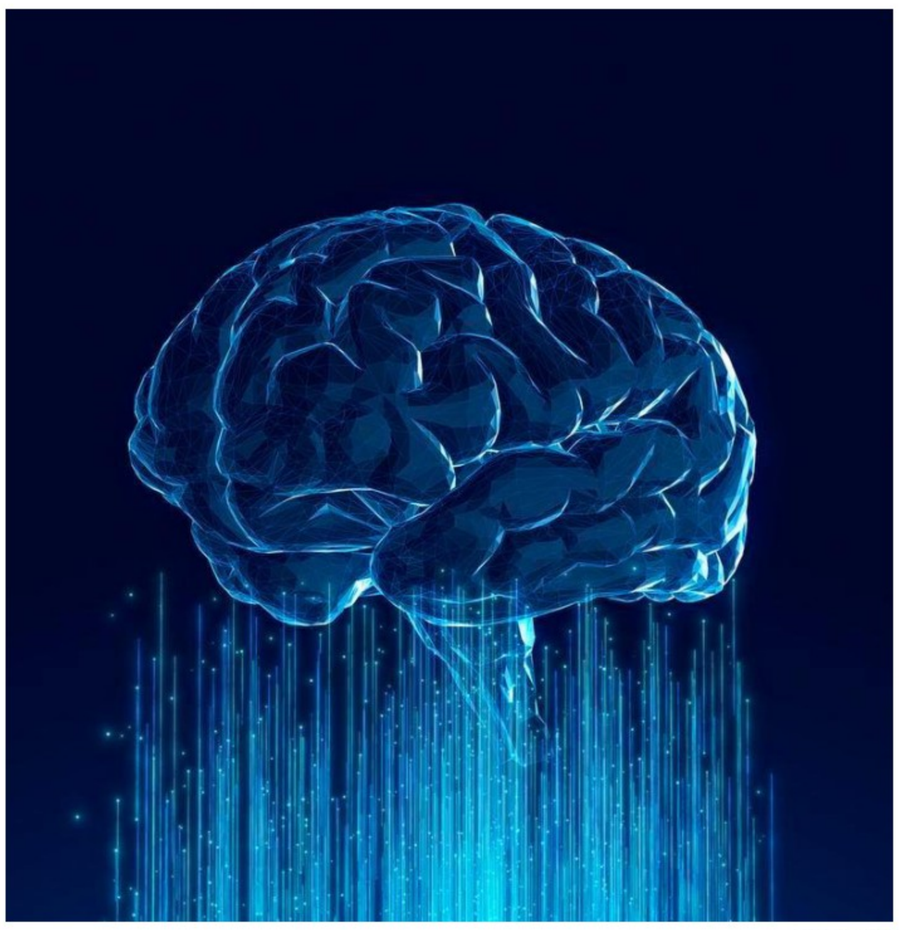
CACHE

AI and the brain: similar in scale, different in design

GPT-4 introduced mixture-of-experts architectures that activate only specialised portions of a network for a given task. This resembles the brain's selective recruitment of different regions

Sabyasachi Shivkumar

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has undergone a massive growth spurt. However, not so long ago, Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude were curiosities. You could trick them, confuse them, or make them contradict themselves. Today, they have evolved into versatile companions that can write software, assist scientific research, extract insights from a large set of documents, and offer structured guidance across a wide range of domains. Today's multi-modal AI systems no longer operate on text alone; they interpret images, analyse audio, generate video, and combine these streams in seamless ways. Language, reasoning, and creativity, capacities we associated with ourselves are now appearing, at least on the surface, in machines.



GETTY IMAGES

Scaling a neuron

Tracing the foundations of these AI systems, one can observe that the core idea behind them is not new. Artificial neural networks have existed since the late 20th century, and their conceptual roots go back even further. In 1943, Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts proposed a simple mathematical model of a neuron. The McCulloch-Pitts neuron takes numerical inputs, multiplies them by adjustable weights, sums the results, and applies a non-linear function to produce an output. This is similar to how one takes input from multiple people and makes a decision if enough people agree on a course of action. Individually, such units are extremely simple. Yet a powerful mathematical insight, known as the universal approximation theorem, shows that networks composed of enough of these simple units can approximate virtually any function connecting input to output. With sufficient scale, they can process remarkably complex patterns.

For a long time, that was the limiting factor. Neural networks existed, but the hardware and data required to make them powerful were not available. What changed over the past 15 years was not the invention of neural networks but the availability of enormous computational power and data. Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), originally developed for video games, enabled researchers to train networks with millions and eventually billions of parameters. At the same time, new architectural ideas improved how these networks were organised. Convolutional neural networks proved effective for image recognition by exploiting spatial structure. Recurrent neural networks were designed to handle sequences such as speech and text by allowing information to persist over time. The major breakthrough, however, came with the transformer architecture, which introduced attention mechanisms that allow models to dynamically weigh which parts of their input matter most at any given moment

GPT, short for Generative Pre-trained Transformer, builds on this architecture. It is trained on vast collections of text to predict the next word in a sequence. Although this objective appears simple, when implemented at an enormous scale and trained on extensive datasets, the model begins to capture grammar, facts, stylistic patterns, conceptual relationships, and even fragments of reasoning embedded in language. Intelligence, in this framework, emerges from the statistical regularities underlying the text the model is trained on.

On the artificial and biological

As these systems grow, they are beginning to rival the human brain in sheer numbers. GPT-3 contained 175 billion parameters, while newer models are estimated to reach into the trillions, approaching the roughly 100 trillion synapses in the human brain. Despite this apparent convergence in scale, AI and biological intelligence operate on fundamentally different principles.

To take advantage of modern computing hardware, models such as GPT-3 process information in a strictly feed-forward manner. Input enters the network, flows through stacked layers, and produces an output. Each layer transforms the representation and passes it forward without revisiting earlier computations during the same pass. This design enables efficient training across thousands of GPUs simultaneously and allows rapid scaling.

The human brain operates differently. Constrained by biology and metabolism, it cannot rely on brute-force parallel computation. Instead, it is built around dense feedback loops. Signals in the cortex flow forward from sensory areas to higher regions, but also backward and laterally. Perception is therefore not a one-way processing of the world but an ongoing dialogue between incoming information and prior knowledge. A simple example makes this clear. When you read the name "Harry" in a story about wizards, you probably think of Harry Potter. In a newspaper article about the British royal family, you would think of Prince Harry. Context shapes perception almost immediately. The brain does not first register a neutral word and then decide what it means. Meaning is built into perception itself. In ambiguous sentences, visual illusions, or noisy environments, expectations strongly influence what we see and hear. The brain constantly predicts and then updates those predictions based on incoming signals.

For example, when searching for a friend in a crowded space, the brain enhances features associated with that person while suppressing irrelevant details. Neuromodulatory systems carry out this selective attention by changing the input-output gains of the synapses instead of actually changing the hard-wired connections. Acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter tracks the uncertainty of different cues adjusting the reliance accordingly. Norepinephrine, another neurotransmitter, indicates when context changes abruptly and suppresses the feedback strength allowing the circuits to shift activity to a different behavioural mode. Dopamine conveys reward prediction errors, modulating synaptic plasticity to form behaviourally relevant representations.

At the cellular level, the brain achieves efficiency through event-driven signalling. Neurons communicate using brief electrical spikes. If a neuron does not spike, it consumes minimal energy. At any moment, only a small fraction of neurons are active. This natural sparsity ensures that energy is expended only when meaningful events occur. Memory and computation are co-located at synapses. The same molecular structures that transmit signals also store the history of past interactions. Learning occurs locally at individual connections rather than through a global optimisation signal sweeping across the entire brain.

This feedback-rich and chemically regulated architecture allows the brain to perform perception and reasoning using roughly 20 watts of power, roughly what a couple of LED bulbs consume. Large AI systems, in contrast, activate vast numerical matrices for every input and rely on high-precision digital arithmetic. Training and operating them requires data centres consuming megawatts of electricity. They are also far more data-intensive. Modern LLMs are trained on trillions of words, whereas humans encounter only a fraction of that amount over a lifetime, yet develop flexible understanding and generalisation.

Mirroring the brain

Researchers are increasingly attempting to borrow insights from biology. GPT-4 introduced mixture-of-experts architectures that activate only specialised portions of a network for a given task. This resembles the brain's modularity and selective recruitment of different regions for language, vision, or movement. Newer models now adjust computational effort based on task difficulty. Recent hardware developments include changes in the fundamental chip design to build neuromorphic chips that use spike-like operations to reduce energy consumption. At the same time, researchers are also exploring richer training methods that move beyond mere next-word prediction, allowing machines to learn complex concepts from far less data.

Yet these advances remain approximations. Neural networks implement sparsity through engineered routing rather than metabolic constraint. They approximate feedback using attention mechanisms and deep layering rather than through densely interwoven recurrent circuits. True recurrence, in which activity loops continuously between layers, is computationally difficult to train and challenging to parallelise efficiently at scale. As a result, most LLMs rely primarily on deep feed-forward structures that simulate certain effects of feedback without fully embodying it.

Moreover, biological neurons are far more complex than artificial ones. A single cortical neuron contains branching dendrites that perform intricate nonlinear computations before producing a spike. In some respects, the many stacked layers of a deep network attempt collectively to approximate the internal processing that fewer biological neurons accomplish individually. Artificial neurons are simplified mathematical constructs. Biological neurons are biochemical systems embedded in a constantly changing chemical environment.

Where this leads remains uncertain. Machines are not bound by the evolutionary and size constraints that shaped our brains. They can scale in ways biology cannot. It is possible that AI systems will gradually bridge and perhaps even surpass the brain in terms of computational power, energy efficiency and learning efficiency. But it is equally possible that machines will diverge further from biological intelligence, evolving architectures better suited to processing information at scales far beyond human experience. In the end, intelligent behaviour does not have to be implemented in brain-like circuits. A pacemaker supports the function of the heart without resembling cardiac tissue. Similarly, AI may one day mimic, extend, or augment human cognition without replicating its biological substrate. In the end, it is intelligence itself, not its resemblance to the brain, that matters.

Sabyasachi Shivkumar is a computational cognitive neuroscientist who recently completed his postdoctoral training at Columbia University working on understanding behaviour through computational models.

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

I whipped up some dessert for the evening

Don't take his replies too personally. I have heard he is a very dry texter

S. Upendran

"How was dinner at Sujatha's place? She's a fantastic cook, isn't she?"

"I don't really know! You see, she'd forgotten that she had invited Kirthi and me for dinner!"

"Really? That doesn't sound like the Sujatha I know! She's always organised."

"She was very embarrassed. She said she'd whip up something to eat.."

"Whip up? What are you talking about? How can she whip something..."

"The expression 'whip up' has several different meanings. In the context of cooking, it means to prepare something very quickly. For example, when my mother realised how hungry we were, she whipped up some upma."

"Did Sujatha whip up something delicious for the two of you?"

"She wanted to, but Kirthi said no. The three of us had dinner in a restaurant."

"I'd sent Kirthi a longish message last night. All I got was a one-word reply. "

"Don't waste your time typing long messages to Kirthi. He's a dry texter."

"Dry texter?"

"A 'dry texter' is someone who gives very short replies to your messages. It could be just one word or one sentence."

"Looking at the reply makes you feel very frustrated or angry."

"Exactly! The texter makes little or no effort to keep the conversation going. He doesn't ask any questions. Such short texts are called 'dry texts'."

"I see. Does it mean a person who sends dry texts is not interested in people?"

"Not necessarily! A dry texter could be someone who hates texting. He could be fun when you meet him face to face. He's not good when it comes to texting. Vinod is a dry texter. When you meet him face to face, he's a totally different person."

"Vinod's sister is not a dry texter. She knows how to keep a conversation going."

"Can you guess what the opposite of dry texting is?"

"Logic suggests that it should be 'wet texting'!"

"Very good! That's exactly what it is. A wet texter is someone who gives lengthy replies, and keeps the exchanges fun."

"By the way, what is the correct pronunciation of b..a..d..e? I've heard people pronounce it in different ways."

"The word can be pronounced in two different ways – both of which are acceptable. Perhaps the easiest way is to pronounce it like the word 'bad'."

"In which case, the 'e' is silent."

"No matter how you pronounce the word, the 'e' is always silent. Another way of pronouncing the word is to make it rhyme with 'made', 'shade' and 'paid'."

"So, the word consists of only one syllable?"

"That's right! It's a monosyllabic word."

upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

With the teaser for the much-anticipated Kamal Haasan-Rajinikanth starrer creating waves, a quiz on the films in which these thespians have acted together

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1

Easy one to start with. Name the first film where these two starred together, which was also Rajinikanth's debut film.

QUESTION 2

Ace Director Bharathiraja's first film *16 Vayathinile*, a groundbreaking flick in Tamil, saw both of them playing memorable roles. What were the names of their characters?

QUESTION 3

What was the Tamil version of the Telugu *Andamaina Anubhavam*, a musical blockbuster where a major portion of the film was shot in Singapore?

QUESTION 4

The last time the two shared the screen as full-fledged co-leads was a 1979 fantasy film made both in Tamil and Malayalam. Name the work.

QUESTION 5

Hrishikesh Mukherjee's all-time favourite *Gol Maal* made in Tamil by K. Balachander was Rajinikanth's first full-length comedy film with Kamal Haasan making a cameo as a lawyer. Name the flick.

QUESTION 6

In their only Hindi film to date, Kamal played the protagonist's brother and Rajini made a cameo as an inspector. Name the film and the legend who enacted the role of Kamal's sibling.

QUESTION 7

Who is directing and composing the music for the reunion film?

Visual question:

Name this acclaimed K. Balachander work, a remake of the Telugu *O Seeta Katha*, where Rajinikanth refuses to save Kamal Haasan from drowning.

Questions and Answers to the February 20 edition of the daily quiz: 1. Name the paper published by Google researchers in 2017 that introduced the Transformer architecture. **Ans: 'Attention Is All You Need'**

2. Name the specialised processing units within NVIDIA GPUs. **Ans: Tensor Cores**

3. Copilot grounds its LLM responses in real-time web data by using this proprietary orchestrator that connects to the Bing search index. **Ans: Prometheus**

4. Name the Israeli-Canadian scientist who co-invented AlexNet. **Ans: Ilya Sutskever**

5. Expand RNN and LSTM. **Ans: Recurrent Neural Networks and Long Short-Term Memory networks**

6. Define 'hallucination'. **Ans: The term for an error when a LLM asserts a fabricated or nonsensical piece of information as a fact**

Visual: Name this young IITM alumnus. **Ans: Aravind Srinivas**

Early Birds: Piyali Tuli| Tom Alan Faith| Neil Lall| Arjun Debnath| Jasvir Kaur Chahal

Word of the day

Peremptory:
offensively self-assured or given to exercising usually unwarranted power; not allowing contradiction or refusal

Synonyms: autocratic, bossy, dominating

Usage: *He had a swaggering peremptory manner.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/peremptorypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /pəˈɹɛmptəɹi/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Top Maoist leaders surrender in Telangana

Tippiri Tirupati, also known as Devji, lays down arms along with senior leader Malla Raji Reddy and other cadres; Devji is believed to have taken over as general secretary of the banned outfit after the killing of Nambala Keshava Rao; surrender was expected, details to be revealed soon, say police

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD

The Telangana Police achieved a huge success in its anti-Maoist operations with the surrender of Tippiri Tirupati, also known as Devji, along with senior leader Malla Raji Reddy and a few others in Asifabad district on Sunday.

A senior police official of Telangana confirmed to *The Hindu* that the top Maoist surrendered and the official information would be revealed a couple of days later.

"The surrender was expected and the police was pursuing it," the official said.

The 62-year old Maoist, Devji, a native of Jagtial district, is reported to have succeeded as the general secretary of the CPI (Maoist) after the encounter of Nambala Keshav Rao in May 2025.

Devji's surrender comes in the wake of several senior leaders either being killed in the encounters or laying down their arms to leave the movement that is getting diluted day by day.

Other cadres follow

Along with Devji, another senior Maoist leader from Telangana playing a key role at the national level, Malla Raji Reddy, also surrendered.

Several cadres of the Maoists also followed their leaders.

Devji's surrender is considered to be a major achievement for the Telangana Police and a setback for the movement. FILE PHOTO

The development comes in the wake of surrendered Maoists asking the rest to lay down their arms as there is no patronage for the militant movement in the present circumstances.

In fact, an influential Maoist, Mallojula Venugopal Rao, a Telangana native, who surrendered along with cadres in Gadchiroli in October 2025, had advised the Maoists to lay down their arms.

The Union government has also fixed March 2026 as the deadline to eliminate the armed struggle from the country.

Major achievement

Devji's surrender is considered to be a major achievement for the Telangana Police since many senior Maoists from Telangana, heading the organisation across the nation, recently surrendered in neighbouring Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh rather than Telangana.

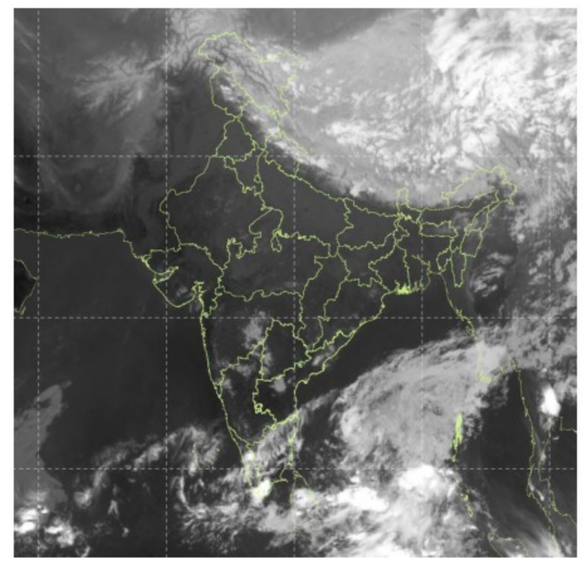
Police officials revealed that Devji played a major role in the creation of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) and went on to occupy the key posts within the organisation such as Central Committee member and politburo leader.

Attracted to the armed struggle during his Intermediate days in 1982, Devji was part of the now-banned Radical Students Union (RSU), a student affiliate of the then People's War Group (PWG).

Devji went underground after a case was booked against him during ideological clashes between the RSU and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad in Karimnagar district.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm with lightning likely at places over Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh, East Madhya Pradesh, Gangetic West Bengal, Telangana and Vidarbha. Squally weather likely to prevail over southwest Bay of Bengal near Southeast Bay of Bengal, and adjoining Sri Lanka coasts.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	31.5	17.0	Kozhikode	0.2	35.1	26.0
Ahmedabad	—	35.4	18.2	Kurnool	—	37.0	22.5
Aizawl	—	30.0	12.2	Lucknow	—	29.4	14.0
Allahabad	—	31.2	15.0	Madurai	—	37.0	25.0
Bengaluru	—	32.4	19.6	Mangaluru	—	34.0	23.6
Bhopal	—	32.2	14.6	Mumbai	—	31.8	23.1
Bhubaneswar	—	35.7	18.4	Mysuru	—	34.0	23.6
Chandigarh	—	27.2	11.2	New Delhi	—	29.8	13.0
Chennai	—	32.9	25.4	Patna	—	28.8	17.6
Coimbatore	—	34.2	23.4	Port Blair	—	31.9	25.5
Dehradun	—	25.9	12.8	Puducherry	—	31.1	24.1
Gangtok	—	16.0	10.0	Pune	—	33.5	17.0
Goa	—	33.0	23.5	Raipur	—	34.8	20.3
Guwahati	—	31.4	15.8	Ranchi	—	29.0	14.0
Hubballi	—	34.0	22.0	Shillong	0.1	20.3	9.5
Hyderabad	—	33.5	21.4	Shimla	—	20.8	9.4
Imphal	—	27.5	11.4	Srinagar	—	20.7	1.7
Jaipur	—	29.3	15.4	Thiruvananthapuram	2.0	32.2	24.4
Kochi	36.0	30.2	22.8	Tiruchi	—	33.9	23.6
Kohima	—	23.8	10.7	Vijayawada	—	35.2	22.2
Kolkata	—	33.5	18.2	Visakhapatnam	—	32.0	22.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.70	..93	75	... 205	...251	
Bengaluru	...6	..31	17	... 126	99	
Chennai	.12	..10	60	 97	76	
Delhi	..—	110	22	... 226	...167	
Hyderabad	...4	8	..8	... 131	...136	
Kolkata	.28	..77	32	... 225	...144	
Lucknow	.14	..28	45	... 136	...144	
Mumbai	...4	..63	32	... 174	...141	
Pune	..—	..88	59	... 230	...160	
Visakhapatnam	.14	..73	22	 90	...128	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 302 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Madikeri, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 18.

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Safari resumes at Bandipur after over three-month gap

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

After a gap of more than three months, safari operations resumed at Bandipur forest on Sunday.

The Forest Department officials have not only brought down the number of safari vehicles, but also reduced the duration of safari. The forest safari, which had been suspended in the wake of tiger attacks in November, has been resumed following orders issued by the government, subject to certain conditions. According to Naveen Kumar, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Bandipur Tiger Reserve Sub-division, the Forest Department had deployed nine safari vehicles in the morning session and eight vehicles in the afternoon session. Similarly, Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd. has been permitted to operate six safari vehicles.

He said safari had been restricted to five hours daily at present. Safari operations would be held only from 6.30 a.m. to 9 a.m. in the morning session and from 3.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the evening session.

IISc Open Day on March 7

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Indian Institute of Science (IISc) will be organising the Open Day event to showcase its activities to the student community and the general public on March 7 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

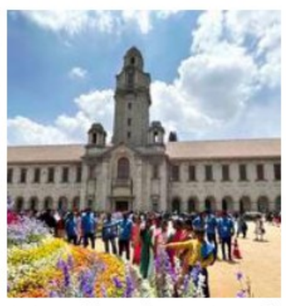
According to the IISc, on this day students, science and technology enthusiasts, and the public will have an opportunity to visit the institute and go around the campus to explore the exciting science and technology initiatives and activities of the IISc.

The Open Day will feature popular lectures, experimental demos, poster presentations, quiz contests, scientific competitions and exhibitions.

A kids zone will offer a special attraction for all younger students. Entry to the event is free.

"The Open Day is for the IISc's departments to showcase their research activities. We are unable to entertain requests from those outside the IISc to showcase their activities," it said.

It further added that the institute has received an overwhelming response from institutions and individuals to visit the IISc campus for the Open Day.



A view of the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

It said that in order to minimise inconvenience to the visitors and to streamline logistics, visitors are strongly encouraged to use public transportation as far as possible. Inside the IISc campus, the visitors may use e-Rickshaws to commute from one-end to another. Fifteen e-Rickshaws (Trans-Vahan) have been pressed into service which will be free of cost.

"Since construction work is going on at several places inside the campus, the visitors are requested to walk with care. Parents and guardians are requested to keep a constant watch on their younger ones," it said.

Help desks are available at all vantage spots. "Please bring your own water bottles. Water will be available in plenty for refilling," the IISc said.

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Access, Exposure, Capability, Innovation

How India can build a STEM Knowledge Grid by 2030

Harilal Bhaskar

India often speaks proudly about its demographic dividend, digital expansion, and deep-tech ambition. Yet beneath the optimism rests a quiet contradiction: we expect 21st-century innovation from an education and research ecosystem still shaped by 20th-century structures.

Many institutions continue to work with ageing laboratories. School science remains theory-centred. Teachers are overburdened. Industry engagement is sporadic. Even our brightest students rarely interact with authentic scientific tools before entering the job market.

If India intends to lead the world in climate tech, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, defence R&D, and space innovation by 2030, a slow, incremental path will not suffice. We need a decisive shift from the classroom as the primary learning unit to a distributed national knowledge grid, co-created through modern Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) that are capability building, flexible, modular, and innovation-driven.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Learning Ecosystems: Around the world, the EU's Digital Education Action Plan and America's regional innovation hubs have shown that learning ecosystems – not isolated campuses – build innovation capacity. India needs its own version: Knowledge Grid = Public Infrastructure + Private Expertise + Student Mobility. This involves institutions providing classrooms, labs, and academic frameworks; industry contributing tools, domain knowledge, mentors, and real problem statements; and students moving seamlessly across these nodes, learning from real challenges rather than outdated theory.

Every district becomes a STEM node. Every node connects to national labs and industrial clusters. Not a new mega-campus but a living network.

Industrial Sandbox Rooms: A major barrier in India is late exposure to real scientific tools. Students often encounter equipment for the first time in their twenties, if at all. A rapid reform is to create Industrial Sandbox Rooms in schools and colleges. These are small tactically designed micro-labs equipped with simplified industrial machines, simulators for electronics, chip design, drone systems, and materials, and quarterly "challenge kits" inspired by industry use-cases. Students will learn through experimentation, failure-driven insight, and project-based exploration. Germany's dual-system and South Korea's early-tech exposure models demonstrate the transformative power of such small units. India can adopt the same logic at Indian cost points, with Indian ingenuity.

Inverted Internships: One-week internships cannot build competence. A more realistic model is the Inverted Internship. This will involve industry-on-campus modules or three-day bursts where engineers, designers, and technicians teach how products are actually designed, how constraints shape engineering, how failures are analysed, and how real teams solve practical problems. This removes relocation barriers, cuts bureaucracy, and injects contemporary industry thinking into classrooms instantly.

Challenge Bank: By 2030, India doesn't need more syllabus chapters. It needs thousands of real-world problem statements. A National STEM Challenge Bank – drawing challenges from ISRO, DRDO, CSIR labs, hospitals, agri-tech centres, environmental missions, and start-ups – can redefine how India learns.

Student teams solve these problems and earn micro-credits, internship priority, and national recognition. This shifts STEM from exam culture to solution culture.

Public-Private Teaching Fellowships: Across India, thousands of brilliant professionals hold expertise that rarely enters education. A Teaching Fellowship can channel this talent. Professionals teach for four hours a week for one semester, supported by contribution credits and CSR-linked incentives. They bring authenticity, current industry insight, real career visibility, and role modelling. Teachers receive reinforcement. Students gain clarity. Industry helps shape its own future workforce.

District STEM Operator Academies: India's innovation bottleneck is not just scientists. It is also the shortage of skilled operators, technicians, instrument specialists, and lab managers. These academies, jointly run by institutions and industry, can train youth in equipment handling, calibration and testing, prototyping, quality systems, and repair and maintenance. Europe's technician schools and America's community-college lab-tech programmes show how vital this layer is. India urgently needs its own.

STEM Access Pass: A simple but powerful reform is a subscription that lets any student use participating labs and sandbox rooms across institutions. This model increases lab utilisation, gives institutions predictable revenue, ensures equitable access, and breaks the public-private resource divide. It is practical, democratic, and deployable at national scale.

Rural Talent Express: India's talent is everywhere but access is not. A Rural Talent Express fleet – mobile labs, drone classrooms, coding buses, and sensor vans – can bring monthly exposure to electronics, drone mapping, coding, sample testing, and materials basics. This ensures that the next generation of inventors may emerge from any block, not only major cities.

Access → Exposure → Capability → Innovation. This is the cycle that built the EU's maker ecosystems and America's innovation clusters. India already has the talent; it needs to give that talent early trust and early tools. If we build this Knowledge Grid now, by 2030 India will see every Class 10 student confident with real instruments, rural districts contributing innovation, strong industry-academia collaboration, a large, skilled technical workforce, and STEM becoming a national capability, not a specialised niche.

India does not require decades to transform its scientific destiny but intent, coordination, and a redesigned ecosystem.

The writer is the COO and National Coordinator of I-STEM

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Tariffs in trouble

The U.S. Supreme Court has done well to limit Trump's presidential powers

In a major blow to a central pillar of U.S. President Donald Trump's foreign policy, the country's Supreme Court (SCOTUS) has ruled by a 6-3 margin that his use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose tariffs on numerous countries is not in accordance with law and must be struck down. With Chief Justice John Roberts and two other conservative justices appointed by Mr. Trump siding with the three liberal justices on the subject, the Court ruled that Mr. Trump's assertion of "extraordinary power to unilaterally impose tariffs of unlimited amount, duration, and scope", is contravened by the absence of "clear congressional authorization" to exercise it. It also observed that the IEEPA contained no reference to tariffs or duties and that the executive had not identified any statute that used the word "regulate" to authorise taxation. Arguing that until now no President has read IEEPA to confer such power, the SCOTUS concluded that all the evidence available and its reading of the statutes implied that the Court believed that "IEEPA does not authorize the President to impose tariffs." Unsurprisingly, Mr. Trump reacted angrily on social media, posting that he would be raising his global tariff rate to 15%, after initially suggesting that it would be imposed at 10%, under the authority conferred to the White House for 150 days under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. Tariffs imposed under laws other than the IEEPA, including those on aluminium and steel under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, are unaffected by this ruling although Mr. Trump would face challenges in bringing fresh tariff rounds under this umbrella.

While multiple countries were slapped with tariffs earlier, including India at a whopping overall rate of 50% owing to Washington's objections to New Delhi purchasing oil from Russia, the impact of the SCOTUS ruling will vary based on the specifics of trade agreements struck, if any. Indian negotiators seeking to conclude the terms of a free trade agreement would not be blamed for feeling like they were suspended in limbo after the ruling has changed the terms of debate on which sectors to open up to concessionary rates in bilateral trade, especially after the American side's punitive potential has now been defanged to an extent. At a broader level, the ruling is to be welcomed by anyone valuing robust democratic checks and balances. The two administrations of Mr. Trump have stretched, and in some cases exceeded, the scope of permissible policy actions under domestic and international law. Until this ruling by the court, there has been a deafening silence on containing such actions by institutions rooted in constitutional authority that are capable of imposing a countervailing force.

Lines in the sand

The Pax Silica alliance holds benefits, but could also tie India down

India's entry into the Pax Silica alliance represents a strategic manoeuvre to secure its technological future by aligning with a U.S.-led coalition focused on the infrastructure for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and critical minerals. Its membership could boost domestic industrial goals by complementing initiatives such as India Semiconductor, IndiaAI, and National Critical Mineral Missions. By joining this ecosystem, India will aim to secure raw materials supply and advanced equipment, attract investment, and influence global tech and security standards. India does not currently possess significant capacity in processing critical minerals nor does it extract them in large quantities. That said, for the rest of the world, including the Pax Silica group, the more important implication is in India's potential to shift the centre of gravity for global manufacturing and consumption. India's massive demand can be useful to financially justify new supply chains, especially ones not pegged to China; the country can also provide the engineering talent and assembly capacity required to diversify the global technology supply chain. India's participation could also add significant geopolitical weight to the bloc's efforts to establish democratic governance for critical technologies, rendering the coalition's standards more viable.

Of course, there is no such thing as a free lunch. The implications for India include potential economic retaliation from China, such as trade friction, slower market access, or pressure on upstream inputs such as minerals and active pharmaceutical ingredients. The Pax Silica partnership's focus on "trusted ecosystems" could also translate into rigid expectations regarding export controls and technology-transfer guardrails, which could clash with India's preference for not locking itself into alliances but, instead, pursuing what External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has called "issue-based alignments". The government could open itself up to more criticism at home particularly if the U.S.-led bloc also begins to shape India's domestic AI rules in ways that look externally driven. Smaller Indian firms attempting to join global value chains could also face significant financial burdens and longer timelines due to stricter security audit requirements. In the end, the success of Pax Silica will depend on whether its partners go beyond talks to build a real-world supply chain where raw minerals are mined, refined, turned into chips, and used to power AI systems, all among the pact's members, creating a secure technology network that drives India's economic growth while protecting the alliance from disruptions.

Parliament's historic law, an extended wait for women

S.Y. Quraishi

is a former Chief Election Commissioner of India and the author of 'An Undocumented Wonder: The Making of the Great Indian Election'

When Parliament passed the Women's Reservation Act in September 2023, millions of Indian women believed that their moment had finally arrived. One-third of all Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats would be reserved for them. The legislation was hailed as a historic victory for gender justice, ending decades of parliamentary stalemate. But the Act contains a clause that changes everything: reservation will begin only "after the first Census taken after the year 2026" and the subsequent delimitation of constituencies. Thus, on the Act's own terms, implementation in 2029 is constitutionally impossible.

This is not a political prediction. It is a legal and logistical certainty. The next general election will be held in 2029 – before the constitutional prerequisites can be completed. Unless Parliament amends the Constitution again, Indian women cannot exercise their guaranteed representation until at least 2034.

The constitutional roadblock

The timeline is unforgiving. The Act mandates two sequential steps: first, a national Census; second, a delimitation exercise based on that Census data. Both are constitutionally required. Neither can be bypassed.

The next Census is scheduled for 2027. After enumeration, the data must be verified, compiled, and officially published – a process that, historically, has taken between 12 to 18 months. Only after official publication can the President of India constitute a Delimitation Commission under Article 82.

That Commission then faces an unprecedented task: redrawing 543 parliamentary constituencies and over 4,000 State Assembly constituencies. As this writer examined in these pages recently, the Commission must balance population distribution, administrative boundaries, geographic compactness, community representation, and the creation of reserved constituencies for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and now women.

India has constituted four Delimitation Commissions since Independence. Not one completed its work in fewer than three years. The most recent, established in 2002, took six years –and it was an exercise which only redrew internal boundaries without reallocating seats among States. The next Commission will be far more complex, reallocating seats among States for the first time since 1976 while implementing women's reservation simultaneously.

Even on the most optimistic timeline – Census completed in 2027, data published by early 2029, the Commission working with unusual speed – delimitation cannot conclude before 2032 or 2033. But these days, anything is possible. Without a new constitutional amendment removing the Census-delimitation linkage, women's reservation cannot be implemented in 2029. Was this delay accidental or by design? The political arithmetic provides the answer. If reservation was implemented immediately within the existing 543-seat Lok Sabha, 181 constituencies would become women-only, displacing an equal number of male incumbents overnight. No political party wanted to bear that electoral cost.

> To tie the Women's Reservation Act — a constitutional promise — to delimitation fails India's women

The solution was elegant in its political logic: tie reservation to delimitation. After the 2027 Census, when constituencies are redrawn, the total number of Lok Sabha seats is expected to increase substantially – possibly to around 800, perhaps even 888. With an enlarged House, one-third of seats can be reserved for women without displacing current male Members of Parliament.

The political pain is absorbed by expansion rather than replacement. This explains the mechanism. It does not justify the consequence: another decade-long delay for half of India's population.

A history of waiting

Indian women have already waited several years for this legislation. The first Women's Reservation Bill was introduced in 1996. It was debated, amended, reintroduced, and blocked repeatedly. The Bill lapsed with successive Lok Sabhas. It passed the Rajya Sabha in 2010 but never came to a vote in the Lok Sabha.

The 2023 Act was supposed to end that wait. Instead, it has extended it. If delimitation is completed in 2032 or 2033, reservation will apply only from the 2034 general election. Women who celebrated the Act's passage in 2023 will wait through another full election cycle before they can contest a single reserved seat.

By tying women's representation to delimitation, the Act has entangled gender justice with India's most divisive demographic issue: the north-south seat distribution imbalance. When delimitation occurs, States with faster population growth will demand significantly more parliamentary seats. States that invested in population control will see their proportional representation decline. This tension is precisely why delimitation was frozen in 1976 and extended in 2001. By linking women's reservation to this unresolved federal arithmetic, Parliament has placed women's rights hostage to a debate that has paralysed consensus for half a century. This deadlock could further delay delimitation – and with it, women's reservation.

Why should half of India's citizens wait for an exercise that has nothing to do with gender equality? The constitutional timeline is not the only problem. The Act leaves critical design questions unanswered.

First, why does reservation exclude the Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils? The Act applies only to directly elected lower houses.

Second, the Act provides no sub-reservation for Other Backward Class (OBC) women, even though Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women receive proportional sub-quotas. OBC women constitute nearly 40% of India's female population.

Third, the Act mandates that reserved constituencies will rotate after each general election but offers no operational clarity. Will women candidates shift constituencies every five years? How will rotation work when delimitation itself reshuffles boundaries?

These unanswered questions compound the implementation crisis. Without clear rules, political parties will exploit ambiguities, legal challenges will multiply, and women candidates will bear the costs.

A straightforward solution

The constitutional barrier is real, but not inevitable. Parliament created it; Parliament can remove it.

There is no constitutional necessity tying women's reservation to delimitation. Article 15(3) already empowers the State to make "special provisions" for women and children. Parliament can exercise that power again to enable immediate implementation.

The solution is straightforward: amend the Constitution to permit reservation before delimitation, either by modestly expanding the Lok Sabha immediately or by applying reservation within current constituencies for two election cycles.

Alternatively, Parliament could expand the House incrementally – adding 180 seats earmarked exclusively for women – before full delimitation concludes. This would deliver on the reservation promise while avoiding displacement of incumbents.

None of these approaches is technically impossible. What is required is political will.

The government must clarify its road map now. Will it delink reservation from delimitation through amendment? Will it expand the Lok Sabha preemptively? Will it freeze State-wise seat allocation to prevent the north-south debate from derailing women's representation?

Parliament must also address the design gaps: extend reservation to the Upper Houses, include OBC sub-reservation, and publish clear rotation rules developed in consultation with women's organisations and constitutional experts.

Above all, Parliament must recognise one principle: representation delayed is representation denied.

India cannot afford another historic law that waits endlessly to take effect. If reservation is a constitutional promise – and the 2023 Act declares that it is – then it must now become a constitutional reality. Not in 2034. Not after another election cycle. Now.

India's women have waited long enough.

India's leap, from back office to global brain trust

P. Saravanan

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The narrative of India as the 'world's back office' has been officially retired. By early 2026, a profound transformation had occurred. India has become a strategic-nerve-centre for the global corporate elite. What were once known as captive centres are now Global Capability Centres (GCCs), which are sophisticated hubs that do not merely support the parent company but also define its future. This transition from cost-cutting centres to global growth engines marks a watershed moment in India's economic history.

The evolution of Indian GCCs has progressed through four distinct waves, culminating in the current GCC 4.0 era. Initially, centres were established to exploit labour arbitrage and handle routine IT and business process tasks. However, in the last few years, there has been a decisive move toward end-to-end product ownership.

Today, nearly 58% of GCCs in India are investing heavily in Agentic AI, which are autonomous Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems that can reason and execute complex tasks, thereby moving beyond mere experimentation to enterprise-scale deployment. These centres now manage global strategy leadership, high-end research and development (R&D), and proprietary intellectual property (IP) creation, making them indispensable nodes in the global value chain.

Benefits for companies and the nation

For multinational corporations (MNCs), the Indian GCC offers a unique competitive advantage: access to a multi-dimensional talent pool at a scale found nowhere else. With India housing over 1,800 GCCs and employing nearly two million professionals, companies can now drive faster innovation cycles through a follow-the-sun model. Beyond technology, these centres have become global "Centres of Excellence" (CoEs) for finance, legal, and human resources, allowing parent companies to centralise their most critical functions in a high-skill, high-efficiency environment.

Today, Indian GCCs act as global CoEs that drive high-end R&D in fields such as quantum computing, semiconductor design, and Agentic AI. These centres no longer support the parent company. They have end-to-end product lifecycles, from initial conceptualisation and architecture to global deployment and customer feedback loops. This evolution means that the shadow leadership housed in Indian GCCs often possesses greater technical depth and execution power than the traditional headquarters.

> India's Global Capability Centre revolution is drawing eyeballs, but there are challenges as talent gaps, cyber threats and fiscal pressures

For the Indian population, the GCC boom has catalysed high-value employment and regional development. These roles are intellectually stimulating and offer compensation far above that of traditional service-sector jobs, creating a new class of global professionals. Perhaps, most significantly, growth is finally trickling down into Tier-II and Tier-III cities such as Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu), Indore (Madhya Pradesh), and Kochi (Kerala). This geographic diversification reduces the strain on saturated metros such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad while stimulating local real estate, infrastructure, and retail economies across India.

Steering through challenges

Despite the record growth, the GCC ecosystem faces challenges that could threaten its momentum. The primary risk is the widening of the talent gap. Although India produces millions of engineers, the demand for niche skills in AI security, cloud architecture and quantum-resistant cryptography vastly outstrips the supply. This has triggered a fierce war for talent, leading to wage inflation that could eventually erode the value proposition of multinational corporations (MNC).

Furthermore, GCCs hold more critical global data and have become prime targets for state-sponsored cyber-attacks. With the implementation of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, the pressure on GCCs to maintain flawless cybersecurity governance has reached unprecedented levels. Simultaneously, the introduction of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Global Minimum Tax (Pillar Two) fundamentally alters the tax arbitrage benefit that many MNCs previously enjoyed. With a global floor of 15% tax and the continued bone of contention regarding India's 24% markup for software R&D under Safe Harbour rules, fiscal predictability has become a top-tier board concern.

Finally, geopolitical volatility and protectionism pose long-term risks to investment. As of early 2026, global trade professionals are increasingly wary of United States tariff volatility and reshoring policies that encourage MNCs to return critical data operations to their home markets.

While India remains an attractive destination, owing to its scale, any shift toward digital sovereignty in western nations could slow the pace of new GCC setups. Additionally, as India-based centres now handle 13.7% of global cyber-attack incidents (Cyfirma Report, 2023), the threat of state-sponsored espionage and intellectual property theft has made cybersecurity the most expensive operational mandate for modern GCCs.

Need for proactive policymaking

To secure India's position as the world's innovation capital, policymakers must transition from regulators to active facilitators. The National GCC Policy Framework, proposed in the 2026-27 Budget cycle, is a step in the right direction, but execution is the key. The government should introduce a "Single-Window Clearance" system specifically for GCCs to streamline the establishment of legal entities. Additionally, rationalising transfer pricing norms and providing tax safe harbours for R&D-intensive operations will provide the fiscal certainty that global boards demand. By fostering deeper industry-academia collaborations to upskill the workforce in deep tech and offering capital subsidies for Tier-II expansion, India can ensure that its GCC revolution remains sustainable for the next decade.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Court versus Trump

The Supreme Court of the U.S. rejecting U.S. President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs is a reflection of how elected governments take laws for granted. It is time that Mr. Trump respects federal laws and behaves like a President of the American people, not as a sole leader of the world.

Prabhu Raj R.,
Bengaluru

The Nilgiris under siege

The sweeping land changes in the Nilgiris (Tamil Nadu, "Hollowing out the hills", February 22, 2026) highlight not merely an environmental story but also one of governance failure hiding in plain sight. Estates are now vanishing with builders exploiting regulatory loopholes. When recharge areas are paved over and shola patches replaced by concrete, the downstream consequences for Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Erode are not speculative but inevitable. The solution demands more than satellite monitoring or belated notices. A meaningful Minimum Support Price for tea, strict enforcement of the Tamil Nadu Land Reforms Act, and community-level awareness can avert small tea estate distress sales. The Blue Mountains cannot afford to wait for the Madras High Court to act alone.

K. Chidanand Kumar,
Bengaluru

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address.

Protecting the freedom of speech of MPs

P.D.T. Achary

Former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha

Recent happenings in Parliament have brought into sharp focus the issue of freedom of speech in the Houses, guaranteed by Article 105 of the Constitution. Of course, this is subject to other provisions of the Constitution and the rules of the Houses. That the freedom of speech of MPs is subject to the rules of the Houses seems to have created the wrong impression that the provisions of the rules can in a way override constitutional rights. The root of the problem which the leaders of the Opposition face in Parliament lies in this erroneous impression. The Supreme Court has clarified on many occasions that the restrictions on the rights of citizens should not be such that they eclipse those very rights. This principle would apply to the freedom of speech of MPs in the Houses as well. The rules of the Houses are meant to regulate the conduct of the proceedings in accordance with the Constitution.

Expunging words

The question which has arisen in the first part of the Budget Session of Parliament is whether there were too many restrictions imposed on the freedom of speech of the members of the Houses, in particular, the leaders of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, reportedly wrote to the Chairman about the expunction of many portions of his speech and requested him to restore what was cut. His complaint is that after these cuts, his speeches made little sense.

An MP has the right to speak freely in the House and to have their remarks entered into the official records of the House. If the speech is not recorded, is partially recorded, or if many portions are arbitrarily deleted, the MP's right under Article 105 is infringed. Of course, Rule 380 permits the Speaker to expunge words if they are unparliamentary, defamatory, indecent, or undignified. But it permits the Speaker to expunge only the offending word and not sentences or paragraphs from the speech. Naturally, in a civilised debate in the Legislature, there should be no place for offending words which destroy the sanctity of debates and lower the dignity of the House. That is why rules confer the right on the presiding officers of the Houses to remove them from the records. But while exercising this right, the officers are duty-bound to ensure that the freedom of speech of MPs in the Houses is not diminished.

The Constitution adopted freedom of speech as the main privilege of MPs. As Erskine May, an authority on parliamentary system, says, these are special rights which are indispensable for members, for the smooth functioning of the legislature. Only the free, frank, and fearless expression of members' views enables the Legislature to perform its role effectively. If the rule on expunction is applied mindlessly to speeches made in the House, it will stifle the freedom of speech.

What are the constitutional provisions and the rules of the House to which the freedom of speech in the House is subject? Article 121 says no discussion can be held in Parliament on the conduct of a judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court except when the House considers a motion for the removal of that judge. As regards the rules of the House, they impose certain restrictions on the freedom of speech, such as sub judice matters, personal allegations, questioning the bona fides of fellow members, reflecting on the conduct of persons in high authority, and defamatory or incriminatory allegations against any person without giving prior notice to the Speaker. These rules in no way stifle the freedom to speak in the House. The problem arises when these rules are sought to be weaponised. A mindless application of the expunction rule will make a speech incoherent. It must be kept in mind that speeches made in Parliament are preserved for posterity.

Parliamentary conduct and practices have a firm normative base. After independence, when India was transitioning to the post-colonial system, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru reset the relationship between the government and Parliament and the government and the Opposition in Parliament. He would do two things in this context. First, he would be present during the question hour every day and supplement or even correct the answers given by ministers because he believed that Parliament should be given the correct and full information. Second, he would come to the House to listen to the speeches of the Opposition leaders because he believed that he would get to know the reality only from their speeches and not from the adulatory paeans from his own party members. There cannot be a democratic Parliament without an Opposition. As the constitutional lawyer Ivor Jennings said, "Attacks upon the government and upon individual ministers are the function of the Opposition. The duty of the Opposition is to oppose."

A tragic development

The Parliament of the day seems to be losing this perspective. Ours is perhaps the only Parliament in the democratic world where a leader of the Opposition is effectively prevented from speaking in the House and against whom a motion is brought to have him disqualified for life. It is tragic that such an attempt is being made by a senior member of the House when it should be clear that Parliament has no power to disqualify a member. But this move is a pointer to the irretrievable breakdown of the relationship between the government and the Opposition. Jennings' words are prophetic: "The minority agrees that the majority must govern and the majority agrees that the minority should criticise. The process of parliamentary government would breakdown if there were no mutual forbearance."

The freedom of speech of MPs is subject to the rules of the Houses. This seems to have created the wrong impression that the provisions of the rules can override constitutional rights

Cricket goes on, no accountability yet

While the IPL resumes, questions from the 2025 stampede remain unanswered

STATE OF PLAY

K.V. Aditya Bhardwaj
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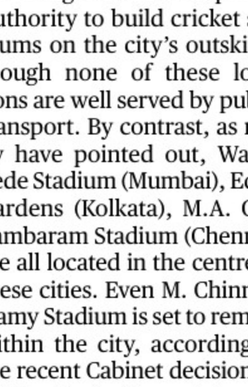
After much deliberation, the Karnataka Cabinet recently cleared a proposal to allow big-ticket cricket matches, particularly those of the Indian Premier League (IPL), at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium. It was in front of this venue in the heart of Bengaluru that 11 Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) fans died in a stampede in June 2025. The team's trophy victory after a 17-year wait had led to a fan frenzy, leading to the tragedy.

Following the incident, the State government, which faced criticism for its alleged failure at crowd control, imposed a blanket ban on cricket matches at the stadium. It did not even allow the Vijay Hazare trophy without spectators. An expert committee, led by Greater Bengaluru Authority chief M. Maheshwar Rao, had found that the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), which runs the stadium, had not implemented the safety measures recommended by the John Michael Cunha Commission after the stampede.

But with former Indian pacer Venkatesh Prasad taking over as chairperson of the KSCA recently, the focus shifted to reviving cricket at the stadium. The State government has now given conditional approval to hold IPL matches this season, after the KSCA promised that all safety precautions would be implemented in a phased manner. As RCB is the defending champion, the opening match of this season is expected to be held here.

The stampede also prompted a debate on relocating the stadium out of the Central Business District. There are four



major sporting venues in the Central Business District – M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bangalore Golf Club, Bangalore Turf Club, and Kanteerava Indoor Stadium – all within a 2-kilometre radius of the State legislature. Last week, the Cabinet also cleared a proposal to shift racing activity out of the Bangalore Turf Club to Kunigal on the city's outskirts.

The discussions have centred around the judicious use of public land and congestion caused by these venues. Over the last eight months, there have been three proposals by the Bangalore Development Authority, the Karnataka Housing Board, and the Greater Bengaluru Development Authority to build cricket stadiums on the city's outskirts, though none of these locations are well served by public transport. By contrast, as many have pointed out, Wankhede Stadium (Mumbai), Eden Gardens (Kolkata), M.A. Chidambaram Stadium (Chennai) are all located in the centre of these cities. Even M. Chinnaswamy Stadium is set to remain within the city, according to the recent Cabinet decision.

The Cunha Commission recommended not holding "any large crowd events" at the stadium, though it did not clarify whether this includes cricket matches. The stadium, built in 1969, has a seating capacity of 33,000 and did not experience a stampede before the tragedy of June 4, 2025. That episode was caused by an unprecedented situation in which a crowd of over 2.5 lakh gathered around the stadium to join the unticketed RCB victory celebrations. An open-air felicitation of the team on the steps of the Vidhana Soudha by the Chief Minister and an announcement of a victory parade of the team that eventually did not take place contributed to the chaos.

Using the tragedy as a benchmark to ban matches was seen as a knee-jerk reaction aimed at covering up the government's own culpability. The terms of reference of the Cunha Commission were also set in such a way that the Commission only examined what happened at the stadium and did not take a holistic view of the incident. Though the Bengaluru City Police were blamed and the City Commissioner was suspended in an unprecedented manner, the Chief Minister's sacking of his political secretary for his alleged role in the day's preparations was an indirect admission of culpability. But now, as public anger over the mismanagement that led to the stampede has cooled off, the government has allowed KSCA to also resume cricket matches at the stadium.

The RCB, the event managers who were part of the victory celebrations, and the KSCA were all booked in the stampede case. Hearing petitions filed by them challenging the FIR, the High Court of Karnataka restrained the State police from filing a chargesheet in the case without their prior permission. No chargesheet has been filed yet. The five police officers suspended over the stampede have all been reinstated. As life moves on, cricket resumes with another IPL season. The families of the 11 who died in the stampede, however, still await justice.

A new CPI base, a clearer inflation signal

Under the new CPI, when States such as Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Karnataka show higher inflation, it points to rising costs in services

DATA POINT

Chandrasekar K.

India's inflation index has been updated to reflect better how households allocate their spending today.

Under the earlier Consumer Price Index (CPI), consumption was grouped into six broad categories, with a wide range of everyday services – such as health, education, transport, and personal care – aggregated into a single head. The revised CPI, shown in **Chart 1,** re-organises the basket into 12 distinct categories in accordance with the Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP) 2018. This improves the visibility of individual components of household expenditure. As a result, the weight of food has declined, while housing and services account for a larger share, in line with long-term changes in consumption patterns. The revision does not alter what households spend; it refines how that spending is measured for inflation.

The intellectual foundation of this approach dates back more than two centuries. In 1822, Joseph Lowe developed the idea of measuring inflation in England during the Napoleonic wars, arguing that treating all prices equally was mistaken and that goods and services should be weighted according to their importance in everyday consumption. The modern Consumer Price Index continues to follow this principle: prices change, but the basket remains fixed for a given base period. The latest revision updates the basket using Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) data and aligns weights with current spending patterns. How this works in practice is illustrated in **Chart 2.**

What does CPI General (Combined) mean? Chart 2 shows the monthly trends of CPI General (Combined), with the base year at 2024. When the report states that the CPI General (Combined) stood at 104.46 in January 2026, consider a simple example. Let us suppose Usha bought a fixed basket of goods in the same proportions covering all 12 CPI categories for ₹100 in January 2024. This year is treated as the base year, so CPI 2024 is set at 100. When Usha returns to the market in January 2026 and buys the same basket of goods in the same quantities, she now has to pay ₹104.46. That is why the CPI for January 2026 is shown as 104.46. In plain terms, CPI 104.46 means that the same basket of goods that cost ₹100 in the base year now costs ₹104.46. Therefore, the CPI indicates how expensive life has become compared to the base year. It reflects the price level, not how fast prices are rising.

The inflation rate explains the pace of price increases. Using the same example, an inflation rate of 2.75% compares prices in January 2026 with prices in January 2025, not with the base year. If Usha bought the same basket for about ₹101.60 in January 2025 and it now costs ₹104.46 in January 2026, the increase over one year is 2.75%. This is why inflation is reported at 2.75%. Simply put, the inflation rate shows how fast prices have risen over the past year. It does not indicate how expensive things already are; it only shows how quickly prices have gone up recently.

Chart 3 highlights the top five States (with a population above 50 lakh as per the last conducted Census in 2011) recording the highest inflation in January 2026 – Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Karnataka. This reflects structural differences in household spending that are captured more clearly under CPI 2024. With the revised index reducing the weight of food and raising the weight of housing and services – based on updated Household Consumption Expenditure Survey data – price pressures in non-food categories now have a greater influence on headline inflation.

In services-intensive States such as Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, higher costs for housing, health, education, transport, and personal services translate more directly into higher inflation. Telangana recorded an inflation of 5% last month. The figures are followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu, which recorded an inflation of 3.67% and 3.36%, respectively.

Rajasthan's inclusion among the higher-inflation States is linked to a key methodological change: CPI 2024 explicitly includes rural housing and utilities, which were not fully captured earlier, thereby correcting an understatement of non-food inflation in largely rural States. Rajasthan recorded an inflation of 3.17% in January this year.

Overall, the chart shows that under the new CPI, State-level inflation is shaped less by food price movements alone and more by differences in consumption structure, a contrast that was less visible under the earlier CPI base.

It also helps explain how the Reserve Bank of India looks at inflation. Under the new CPI, when States such as Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Karnataka show higher inflation, it points to rising costs in services such as rent, health care, education and transport, not just short-term food price changes. This is important for the RBI because food prices often rise and fall quickly, while service prices generally remain high for longer. The CPI 2024 thus enables the RBI to judge whether price pressures are transitory or persistent, a key input for interest-rate decisions.

Chandrasekar K. is with the Indian Statistical Service. The views expressed are personal. Both the figures CPI General (Combined) and the inflation rate of January 2026, using which calculations were made, are only provisional figures

A revised basket

The data for the charts were sourced from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation (MOSPI)

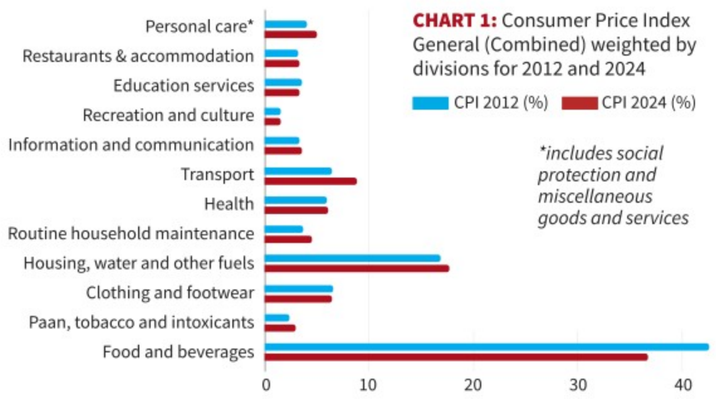


CHART 1: Consumer Price Index General (Combined) weighted by divisions for 2012 and 2024

CPI 2012 (%) CPI 2024 (%)

**includes social protection and miscellaneous goods and services*

1 The revised CPI in Chart 1 re-organises the basket into **12 distinct categories** as per the Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP) 2018

2 The third chart only lists the top five States with a population above 50 lakh as per the last conducted Census in 2011 and which recorded the **highest inflation** in January 2026

CHART 2: Monthly trends of Consumer Price Index General (Combined) (Base 2024=100)

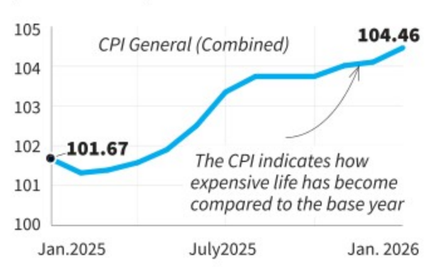
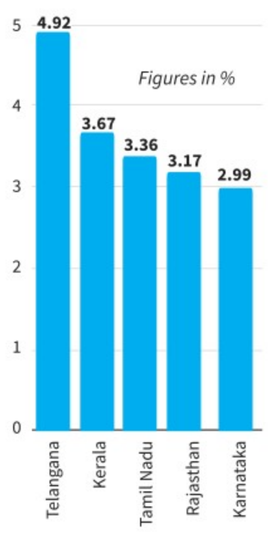


CHART 3: Top five States recording the highest inflation rates in Jan 2026



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 23, 1976

PM suggests cleanliness as part of study

Bombay, Feb. 22: The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, to-day suggested that teaching of cleanliness be made part of educational curriculum, right from kindergarten.

Inaugurating the All-India best city contest here, Mrs. Gandhi said cleanliness, sanitation, and love for trees must be the form of major educational campaign. "It would have been more suitable if I had swept one of the Bombay streets instead of inaugurating the contest." Clean cities led to clean thinking which was a must for any progress, she added.

Mrs. Gandhi said: "We got a bad reputation the world over for lack of cleanliness. Tourists told us that while understanding our socio-economic problems, they did not understand why we lived in dirt. We must take our own initiative and participate in the cleanliness campaign before hearing from foreign advisers on what we should do."

Mrs. Gandhi congratulated Bombay even for moving at snail speed in cleanliness. Others did not move at all, she added. She said she was sure that Bombay would win the contest if the competition was held immediately.

She said apart from the problem of cleanliness, there were problems of air pollution. We must plant a lot of trees and see that the flora and fauna did not die out.

Mrs. Gandhi said rather than merely admonishing people for lack of cleanliness and giving incentives, they must be made to participate in the beautifying programmes.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 23, 1926

Making the road safe for pedestrians

Vienna, Feb. 21: A new contrivance to prevent a motor car from running over pedestrians was demonstrated to the Press by its inventor Jakob Singer. It consists of network of India rubber ropes as wide as the car and fixed in front of it. The Police forbade experiments with living persons, so a wooden image was weighted with iron to 120 pounds with movable limbs and this was at first used successfully. Subsequently a workman obligingly allowed himself to be run down and was caught in the net.

From Page One

Time for nations facing tariffs to unionise: Lula

Brazilian President Lula speaks at the India-Brazil Economic Forum in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

Mr. Lula also called for UN Security Council reforms, and in particular, seats in the Council for India, Brazil, and others.

"Why is India not a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a country that has 1.4 billion people? Why Brazil is not there at the UN Security Council," he said, adding others such as Germany, Mexico, Nigeria and Egypt as well to the list. He said that as a result, the UN today does not have much efficacy. "UN is capable of making a diagnosis but it doesn't have the capability to prescribe medication or do the treatment," he said.

He said India had taught him some lessons in economic management, recounting a story from his visit to India in 2005, during his previous tenure as President, when he was hosted by then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

"It was in India in 2005 that, for the very first time, I perceived the importance of having international hard currency reserves," he said, adding that he was impressed that India had then amassed $100 billion in reserves. He said he had committed to do the same in Brazil, eventually building reserves of $360 billion and Brazil moved from being a debtor to the IMF to a creditor, which he called a "transformative experience" for Brazil.

Mr. Lula recounted some personal memories as well, while speaking about his talks in Delhi which ended with agreements on critical mineral cooperation, steel mining and digital partnership. He said that he was touched that his favourite Brazilian songs were played during the official banquet lunch with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the dinner hosted by President Droupadi Murmu.

Three JeM terrorists killed in Kishtwar: Army

The Army said the forces displayed "tactical precision, seamless synergy and resolute aggression" during the gunfight, and the troops dominated the encounter site. "War-like stores, including two AK-47 rifles, have also been recovered," the Army said.

General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff, commended the troops of the Northern Command for "exemplary professionalism and steadfast resolve" in the ongoing counter-terror operations in Jammu and Kashmir, an Army spokesperson said. He lauded their vigilance, operational excellence and seamless coordination under challenging conditions.

The Army said that it "remains unwavering in its commitment to ensuring lasting peace in J&K with zero tolerance for terrorism in all its forms."

Sunday's encounter was part of Operation Trashi-I, which was launched in January against terrorists active in Kishtwar's Chatroo belt. "Troops of White Knight Corps, along with J&K Police and CRPF, in a joint operation, established contact with terrorists," the Army said.

There have been four major gunfights in the Kishtwar district this year. One soldier was killed on January 18, and a terrorist was gunned down on February 4 in two separate encounters in the district, which has many of J&K's high mountain passes.

Amid SIR push, Calcutta HC forms panel to manage cases

Chief Justice Sujoy Paul meets Chief Electoral Officer, senior officials; following Supreme Court order, judicial officers are set to begin the process of completing the SIR in West Bengal today

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Paper trail: People wait in queues during hearings under the special intensive revision of electoral rolls, at Krishnanagar in Nadia district of West Bengal. PTI

The Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, Sujoy Paul, has constituted a committee to oversee interim arrangements for shifting urgent matters to alternative courts, following the engagement of judicial officers for work related to the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

The development comes in the wake of the Supreme Court's order of February 20, in which it has directed that judicial officers be assigned to complete the ongoing SIR in West Bengal.

The top court pointed out that the persistent "trust deficit" between the State government led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the Election Commission had led to a "stalemate", with time running out.

The committee appointed by Chief Justice Paul comprises Justices Tapabrata Chakraborty and Arijit Banerjee, Registrar General Nabanita Ray, Registrar (judicial service) Raju Mukherjee, and Joint Registrar-cum-Secretary to the Chief Justice Ajay Kumar Das.

District committees

In a separate notification, the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court constituted a committee for each district "for the smooth compliance of the order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court", comprising the District Judge, the District Magistrate, and the Superintendent of Police.

On Sunday, Chief Justice Paul held a meeting with the State's Chief Electoral Officer, Manoj Kumar Agarwal, Chief Secretary Nandini Chakravorty, Director-General of Police Piyush Pandey, Kolkata Commissioner of Police Supratim Sarkar, and other officials representing the Union of India.

It was decided that judicial officers would begin the process of completing the SIR from Monday. The Supreme Court had on February 20 also directed the EC to publish the processed list of electoral rolls on February 28.

Unless the electoral rolls are finalised, the schedule for the Assembly election in West Bengal cannot be announced.

The EC has decided to deploy 480 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces in the State by March 10. The first 240 companies will be deployed by March 1.

ED identifies eight priority areas for coordinated action

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has identified eight focus areas for coordinated action. They are tracking of foreign assets, misuse of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, trade-based money laundering, cyberfraud, illegal online gambling, drug financing, share market manipulation, and foreign interference through illicit funding.

The decision was taken during its 34th quarterly conference of zonal officers in Guwahati from February 19 to 21, headed by ED Director Rahul Navin.

All zonal heads were directed to intensify efforts in tracing and securing proceeds of crime parked abroad, particularly in jurisdictions such as Dubai and Singapore.

They were also told to keep a close watch on professional money laundering channels disguised as trade.

"Instances of potential collusion between corporate debtors, resolution professionals, members of the Committee of Creditors, and other stakeholders were flagged as areas requiring scrutiny," said the agency with respect to IBC-related cases.

Given the rise in digital-arrest scams and other forms of cyberfraud, the ED chief asked officials to crack down on organised syndicates and identify cross-border elements. In cases involving illegal betting and online gaming platforms, they were advised to focus on dismantling the linked financial networks, including payment gateways, mule accounts and offshore operators.

Drug traffickers

The ED will also intensify action against the financial networks of drug traffickers and their "hawala" linkages, money laundering through share market manipulation, and foreign funding channels that may be used for unlawful narrative building, destabilising activities or other anti-national purposes. "The importance of international cooperation and development of institutional soft power was also highlighted, with emphasis on the ED being a reliable, professional and proactive partner for foreign counterpart agencies," the ED said.

Sweet moment: Creators of *Boong* with their award at the 79th British Academy Film Awards in London on Sunday. AP

Manipuri film creates history; secures first BAFTA win for India

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

India created history at the 79th British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) on Sunday with *Boong*, a Manipuri film directed by Lakshmipriya Devi, winning the country's first award on the prestigious stage, considered the British equivalent of the Oscars. The movie won the award in the Best Children and Family Film category.

Boong was India's sole representation at this year's event in London, and beat high-profile and popular contenders such as *Lilo & Stitch,* and *Zootropolis 2 (Zootopia 2),* and animated science fantasy *Arco*. Actor and producer Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani, who backed the movie, attended the event along with Ms. Devi.

Before death, Manipur MLA wrote to PM, sought probe into mob attack

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Five months before his death, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA from Manipur Vungzagin Valte wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi detailing how he was brutally attacked by the "Meitei militia [Arambai Tenggol]".

Valte had said that the attack left him with severe injuries that paralysed him, and despite the gravity of the incident, no special inquiry, either by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or the National Investigation Agency (NIA), was ever initiated.

The letter was sent on September 13, 2025, when Mr. Modi made his maiden visit to Manipur after the ethnic violence broke out on May 3, 2023. Arambai Tenggol, a relatively new radical Meitei armed group, gained notoriety after the conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities started.

Vungzagin Valte

Valte, who never recovered from the life-threatening injuries after being assaulted by a mob on May 4, 2023, passed away at a private hospital in Gurugram, Haryana, on Friday. "The arrest may take time as he was attacked by a mob. We are pursuing all leads," Losii Dikho, Deputy Chief Minister, Manipur told *The Hindu*.

In the letter, Valte had said that as a three-term MLA and BJP adviser to former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, he had "witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by the Zomi-Kuki-Hmar community".

"On May 4, 2023, after attending security meeting at CM's office, to discuss the safe transportation of my people especially Churachandpurians stranded in Imphal due to the ethnic violence, I was brutally attacked on my way back home at RIMS Road by the Meitei militia [Arambai Tenggol], resulting in severe injuries that have left me paralysed and handicapped till date. Despite the gravity of this incident, no special inquiry [CBI/NIA] has been initiated, and the community remains marginalised," the letter said.

He added that the Zomi-Kuki-Hmar community had been driven out of the State capital Imphal and from the valley, leading to complete physical and social divide. "In light of this, I humbly request that a Separate Administration, preferably a Union Territory with a legislature under the Indian Constitution, be granted to the indigenous tribal community as mentioned above," the letter said.

'Lasting solution'

Valte had said that a separate administration would ensure justice, administrative convenience, and a lasting solution. He had said that his appeal aligned with the demands of the Kuki National Organisation and the United People's Front, who are seeking a political solution through Suspension of Operations talks. "I urge you to consider this request at the highest level, as forced imposition of peace has proven unsustainable in Manipur's history," his letter said.

On the fateful day, when Valte was going to his official residence at Lamphelpat in Imphal, his car was stopped by a group of people. He and his driver, Thanghoulal, were physically assaulted.

Looking forward to Israel visit, says Modi

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said he was looking forward to his upcoming visit to Israel.

Mr. Modi said this on X in response to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comment.

"Thank you, my friend... I fully agree with you on the bond between India and Israel as well as the diverse nature of our bilateral relations. India deeply values the enduring friendship with Israel, built on trust, innovation and a shared commitment to peace and progress. Looking forward to our discussions during my upcoming Israel visit," Mr. Modi said.

Modi's visit entangled in Israel's turbulent domestic politics

Press Trust of India
JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming Israel visit is getting entangled in the domestic politics of the West Asian country, with Opposition leader Yair Lapid threatening to boycott his parliamentary address unless the Supreme Court chief is invited for it, as per convention.

Mr. Modi is expected to arrive in Israel on Wednesday, for a two-day visit, during which he is likely to address the Knesset (Israeli parliament) and meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog.

Mr. Lapid has insisted that Supreme Court President Yitzhak Amit be invited to the Knesset when Mr. Modi addresses the House. Sources in the Opposition maintain that it is not a call for a boycott; instead, the government is "intentionally trying to force us into a bad situation". "We spoke to the Indian embassy ... They are in panic from this. Prime Minister of India, Modi, is invited to the Knesset next Wednesday, something that is a matter of honour for all of us," Mr. Lapid told the Knesset recently.

Internal turmoil

Israel's domestic politics is embroiled in a heated debate over judicial overhaul, a divisive issue that has also sharply split the population for over two years. The country faced large protests on the issue before the October 7 attack by Hamas two years ago, drawing hundreds of thousands of people to the streets every weekend for almost 10 months.

Following Mr. Amit's election as court President in January 2025, Justice Minister Yariv Levin has refused to recognise his authority, meet him or address him as head of the court. The State Gazette has also not published his name as the Chief Justice, as required by law.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to address the Knesset and meet his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu during the visit.

This has led to Mr. Amit's exclusion from multiple Knesset events – including addresses by U.S. President Donald Trump and other world leaders – to which he would have traditionally been invited.

Two weeks ago, the Opposition boycotted a Knesset session to celebrate its 77th anniversary due to Mr. Amit's exclusion.

"If the coalition boycotts the President of the top court during the special session with the Prime Minister of India, we will not be able to attend the debate," Mr. Lapid recently told the lawmakers, stressing that another public boycott of Mr. Amit by the coalition would cause "enormous embarrassment" to the legislature.

"We do not want India to be embarrassed by us, with the Prime Minister of a nation of a billion people standing here in front of a half-empty Knesset," Mr. Lapid emphasised.

To prevent harm to ties between Jerusalem and New Delhi, Mr. Netanyahu "must immediately instruct Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana to also invite Supreme Court President Yitzhak Amit to the ceremonial meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Mr. Lapid asserted.

The Opposition leader's threat has led to heated exchanges in the political circles with the Knesset Speaker accusing Mr. Lapid of harming the Indo-Israel relations in order to score domestic political points.

"If the Leader of the Opposition wants to harm the foreign relations of the State of Israel with an important friend of ours..., that is his choice. An unfortunate, wrong choice, and I hope he will reverse it," Mr. Ohana posted on X, calling such threats "illegitimate weapons in an internal political struggle."

The Speaker also called upon the Opposition leader to explain to the Indian government why he did not choose to boycott appearances by Argentinian President Javier Milei and Mr. Trump, "even though Justice Amit was not invited" to their speeches.

Student shot at outside BHU hostel, case filed

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Gunshots were allegedly fired at a student outside the Birla hostel at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), officials said on Sunday. Roshan Mishra, a third-year BA student, claimed three persons arrived on a motorcycle and suddenly opened fire when he was standing outside the hostel on Saturday night. No one was injured in the incident.

"We have registered a case against five individuals... and efforts are under way to catch them," said the police.

The police believed the alleged incident is the result of a rivalry between two students' groups.

BSP seeking 'master key of power', says Mayawati

Press Trust of India
LUCKNOW

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) will continue striving to obtain the "master key of power" through democratic means, party chief Mayawati said on Sunday while chairing an all-India meeting of the party at its central camp office in Lucknow to review organisational strengthening across the country.

Taking note of concerns in the country over trade deals with various nations and blocs – especially the interim deal with the U.S. – Ms. Mayawati said the cutthroat competition among countries to "make themselves first" had pushed the exploitative global order into a deeper crisis.

Alleging that policies of rival parties have undermined their credibility, she said the BSP's governance record in Uttar Pradesh, based on '*Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay*' (welfare of all, happiness of all) and the rule of law, had raised expectations among the public.

She also praised party workers for their efforts despite alleged obstacles from rival parties and governments.

Congress protest shows its ideological bankruptcy: PM

Modi accuses party of using AI Impact Summit for 'dirty and shameless politics'; he says Congress should have taken into account the fact that it was not a BJP or NDA event, but a national event

The Hindu Bureau
GHAZIABAD

In a scathing attack on the Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the principal Opposition party of indulging in "dirty and shameless politics".

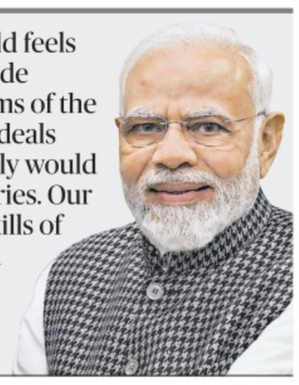
Linking the party youth wing's "shirtless" protest on Friday at the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi to the nation's image, Mr. Modi said the Congress and its ecosystem had touched a new low.

Describing the topless protest as "*nangi rajneeti*" (naked politics) in front of industry leaders, he said it was an example of ideological bankruptcy that had lowered the dignity of a global event.

"Everybody knows you [Congress] are naked. You don't need to take off clothes," Mr. Modi said, addressing a public meeting in Meerut on the sidelines of the inauguration of the Namo Bharat Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) and Meerut Metro.

Separating the Congress from the rest of the Opposition, the Prime Minister said even the Congress's allies had deserted it on the issue.

> Today, the world feels India can provide solutions to the problems of the 21st century. The trade deals India had struck recently would help small-scale industries. Our priority is to take the skills of small businessmen and artisans to the world
>
> **NARENDRA MODI**
> Prime Minister



'Just the Congress'

Mr. Modi asked the media not to generalise his criticism of the Congress as that of the entire Opposition. "Were the TMC (Trinamool Congress), DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party), or NC (National Conference) responsible for the Delhi protest? No, it was just the Congress that sinned, and I want to publicly pay gratitude to those who have criticised the Congress's behaviour," he said.

Reiterating that the Congress leadership hated him and wanted to dig his grave, Mr. Modi said they should have taken into account that the summit was not a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or National Democratic Alliance (NDA) event.

"It was a national event, the first of its kind organised in a developing country to take a leadership role in the 21st century," the Prime Minister said.

A pattern

Describing it as a pattern, Mr. Modi, for the first time, reacted to Speaker Om Birla's apprehension over the picketing of his (Mr. Modi's) Lok Sabha seat by female Congress MPs.

"One has to win hearts to become PM. One can't become PM by sending female MPs to surround the PM's chair. What's the compulsion? Are you that hollow?" the Prime Minister said, targeting the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi.

Eager for trade

Referring to the recent trade agreements with the European Union and the United States, Mr. Modi said the developed world was eager to trade with India.

"It was not the case during the Congress rule because of its scam-tainted image. Today, the world feels India can provide solutions to the problems of the 21st century," Mr. Modi said.

The trade deals India had struck recently would help small-scale and cottage industries, he said. "Our priority is to take the entrepreneurship and skills of small businessmen and artisans to the world," he added.

Prime Minister launches full Delhi-Meerut RRTS corridor

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves to the gathering during the launch of the Meerut Metro and Namo Bharat services. PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated the remaining sections of the Namo Bharat Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS), including the 5-km stretch between Sarai Kale Khan and New Ashok Nagar in Delhi and the 21-km stretch between Meerut South and Modipuram in Uttar Pradesh. The RRTS has been integrated with the Meerut Metro, which was also launched.

Mr. Modi said the entire 82-km corridor of the RRTS project provided a glimpse of what connectivity would look like in a developed India that used Metro rail for intra-city travel and the Namo Bharat trains to accelerate the "twin cities" vision. "This integration allows commuters to travel within the city or go directly to Delhi, thus ending the compulsion for many workers and students to live in rented houses in Delhi. A unique feature of the project is the integration of Indian Railways, Metro, and bus stands at Sarai Kale Khan, Anand Vihar, Ghaziabad, and Meerut," he said.

Talking about development in the regions, Mr. Modi said, "The government's investment in modern infrastructure, including expressways, freight corridors, and the Jewar International Airport is creating vast employment opportunities."

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal, speaking at the inauguration, said the proposal for two new rapid rail corridors starting from Sarai Kale Khan was expected to be approved soon.

"One corridor is planned from Sarai Kale Khan to Karnal in Haryana, covering a distance of 125-130 km, which can be completed in about an hour and a half. Another route is proposed to connect Sarai Kale Khan with Babarpur in Haryana and Neemrana in Rajasthan," he said.

The Sarai Kale Khan station, the originating station of the corridor, is strategically located as a major multi-modal hub, seamlessly connecting the Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station, Delhi Metro's Pink Line, Veer Haqeeqat Rai ISBT, and Ring Road.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, commenting on the launch, said the Delhi-Meerut corridor will transform the capital's pace of development and stimulate economic activity in the Delhi-NCR region. "The corridor will help passengers save time and resources, marking a historic milestone for Delhi and the surrounding region as the project is expected to ease traffic congestion and reduce carbon emissions by reducing the number of private vehicles on the roads, thereby creating a positive environmental impact," she said.

Congress rebuts PM, says women MPs were protesting for a cause

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday reacted sharply to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that "one can't become Prime Minister by sending women MPs to capture the Lok Sabha seat". Mr. Modi made the comments at a public event after inaugurating the Delhi-Meerut Rapid Rail Transit System.

"It is very unfortunate that Prime Minister forgets that Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi *ji* was not allowed to speak during the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address. For two days, Mr. Gandhi was not allowed to speak in Lok Sabha. Then, eight of us were suspended. Only then women MPs protested," Congress Whip in the Lok Sabha Manickam Tagore said in a video posted on X. "You were afraid to come to the House, Mr. Prime Minister. It is not as if the women MPs, who belong to Dalit and backward classes, were misbehaving, they were protesting for a cause," he added.

The Prime Minister had "compromised the interest of farmers, MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) and textile industry" through the India-U.S. trade agreement over which Indian Youth Congress workers protested at the recent AI Impact Summit, Mr. Tagore said.

Former IYC chief Srinivas B.V. also defended the IYC's "shirtless protests", and accused the Prime Minister of playing the "victim card". "Did IYC claim the Chinese [robot] dog as Indian? Did IYC get stalls for fraud institutions like Galgotia? Did IYC sign an anti-India trade deal? Did IYC's name come up in the Epstein files?" Mr. Srinivas said in a post on X.

On the draw

AI Impact Summit is a 'turning point' in use of tech: Modi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The India AI Impact Summit "proved to be a turning point in the trajectory of how the world will utilise the power of AI in the future", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday, adding that global leaders were impressed by India's progress in the domain.

In his *Mann ki Baat* address, Mr. Modi – who met global leaders and tech CEOs and showed them India's innovations – said leaders from many countries and industries, innovators, and people from the start-up sector came together at the summit.

Eighty-five countries and three international organisations signed the New Delhi Declaration. "Guided by the principle of '*Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya*' [Welfare for all, Happiness for all], the Declaration underscores that the benefits of AI must be equitably shared across humanity," the government had said.

Mr. Modi said world leaders were impressed by two exhibits at the venue. The first one showed how use of AI helped people in the treatment of animals, and how farmers tracked their livestock with 24x7 assistance.

The second was related to Indian culture and heritage. Mr. Modi said leaders were amazed at how with the help of AI, India is preserving ancient texts, knowledge, manuscripts.

The AI summit, which ended in Delhi on Friday, attracted five lakh visitors.

Mr. Modi urged people to remain vigilant against online financial fraud and digital arrests. He appealed for complete KYC compliance saying it is crucial for the safety of an individual's bank account.

In the backdrop of the Opposition's allegations that the India had compromised the interests of farmers during trade negotiations with the U.S., he said farmers were not just food providers, but true "devotees" of the earth. He highlighted how farmers are blending tradition with technology and cited the example of Hirod Patel in Odisha who has installed a mesh over a pond and is growing vegetables on it. He said in Kerala's Thrissur, 570 varieties of rice are grown in a single field.

"Today, India has become the world's largest rice producer... agricultural products are now reaching foreign countries more easily by air. Nanjangud bananas from Karnataka, Mysuru betel leaves, and Indi lemons were exported to the Maldives," he said.

Lyutens's statue to be replaced by Rajagopalachari's

NEW DELHI
Ahead of the 'Rajaji Utsav' celebration on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that a statue of British architect Edwin Lutyens in Rashtrapati Bhavan will be replaced by that of C. Rajagopalachari, the first Indian Governor-General of independent India.

Former Assam Cong. president Bhupen Borah joins BJP

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Former Assam Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah joined the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday, a week after quitting the party he served for almost 33 years.

State BJP president and MP Dilip Saikia welcomed Mr. Borah, a two-time former MLA, at a programme organised at Vajpayee Bhavan, the party's headquarters in Guwahati.

Soon after joining the party, Mr. Borah said any self-respecting Assamese would cease to stay with the Congress.

"The Congress has 700 ticket aspirants and 100 of them will be able to contest the Assembly election. The remaining 600 may not come to the BJP, but the self-respecting Assamese of Rajiv Bhavan (State Congress headquarters) will come to Vajpayee Bhawan," he told pressperson.

He said the condition of many leaders in the Congress was like that of the Mahabharata's Karna before he died.

Bhupen Borah

"I have moved away from Duryodhana but the Karnas are still there. They will slowly get to know who will be on which side in the battle of the Mahabharata. I want to tell the Karnas of Rajiv Bhavan that the result of this battle has been already decided," he said, pointing to the election to the 126-member Assembly expected in April.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated Mr. Borah for "beginning a new life from today".

Mr. Borah resigned from the Congress on February 17 over differences with the State leadership. The party's top leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, had asked him to consider withdrawing his resignation, but he remained unmoved.

Dismiss Piyush Goyal from Cabinet, SKM urges Murmu

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) has sent a letter to President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday, urging her to dismiss Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal from his post for "betraying the nation's confidence" by entering into a bilateral trade agreement with the United States. The SKM urged her to direct the Prime Minister not to sign the agreement on terms which were detrimental to farmers. It also sought a direction from her against a recent demi-official letter of the Union Finance Ministry asking the Kerala government to end bonus to paddy farmers.

The SKM alleged in the letter that the Narendra Modi government succumbed to the pressures of the U.S. and endangered India's self-reliance and sovereignty. Maintaining that the terms accepted as per the interim deal were detrimental to the interests of the Indian economy and farmers, the SKM said the government remained silent about the terms. "In fact, all announcements made by Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, the chief negotiator, only confirm the worst fears, that the government is either unable to or unwilling to stand up to U.S. diktats. Such acquiescence before an imperial superpower has led to serious resentment among the farming community," the letter said.

The withdrawal of 11% cotton import duty on August 19, 2025 has sunk domestic cotton prices, the SKM said. REUTERS

'No satisfactory answer'

The SKM asked when no deal had been signed as of now, why did U.S. President Donald Trump declare the free trade agreement with India. "Why did Prime Minister Narendra Modi endorse India as a party to the agreement? Why no statement placed in Parliament that was in session? The Prime Minister has yet to give a satisfactory answer," it said.

On cotton, the SKM said India was self-dependent with double the production of the U.S. "The withdrawal of 11% cotton import duty on August 19, 2025 has sunk domestic cotton prices. Cotton farmers are staring at very serious losses," it said, adding that Mr. Goyal was insensitive to this issue. The SKM added that the deal would put over 55 lakh apple farmer families in the country into crisis. Maize would be imported as dry distilled grain (DDG) as per the interim deal and the import of DDG would deplete the domestic prices and impact 120 lakh corn farmers, the SKM maintained.

U.S. trade deal must be put in cold storage, says Congress

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Taking a swipe at the government over the interim U.S. trade deal, the Congress on Sunday said it was reflective of "*Abki baar Trump se haar*" and must be put in "cold storage" in view of the confusion following the U.S. Supreme Court's verdict.

Congress general secretary communications incharge Jairam Ramesh said the terms of the framework for the interim agreement must be renegotiated and the clause talking about import liberalisation, especially of agricultural produce, must be scrapped. Mr. Ramesh said an agreement was about give and take but India had only given under the deal.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given a slogan in Houston in 2019 – '*Abki baar Trump Sarkaar*' but this framework for an interim agreement is proof of '*Abki baar Trump se haar*'," he said. What happened on February 2 that there was a need for the Prime Minister to "force" Mr. Trump to announce the trade deal, he asked.

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(A Government of Andhra Pradesh Undertaking & An ISO 27001-2022 Certified Company)
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The APTRANSCO invites bids online for the following work with **Spec. No: PMMTC2-e-10/2026. Name of the Work:** Supply, Erection / Stringing and Commissioning of OPGW cable and associated equipment under PSD funding for providing reliable communication system upto 132 kV substations in Six Lots. Date & Time of availability of Tender on e-procurement platform i.e., **www.tender.apeprocurement.gov.in** on **23.02.2026 @17:00 Hrs. Contact No. Dy.EE: 8332949383.**
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INBRIEF

Five police personnel killed in Odisha highway accident

Five police personnel were killed and three injured in a collision between their vehicle and a truck laden with stone chips on National Highway 49 in Jharsuguda district of Odisha on Sunday. The police personnel were returning from the wedding of a constable in the Rengali area in the Lakhanpur police station limits, when the accident took place in front of the Jharsuguda Sadar police station. Local people and police personnel took out the victims from the mangled vehicle and rushed them to the Jharsuguda District Headquarters Hospital. The truck driver was detained, and the vehicle seized.

Four teachers, peon held for 'sexually assaulting' minor girl

Four teachers, one of them a woman, have been arrested in Kendrapara district of Odisha for alleged repeated sexual assault on a 12-year-old student on the school premises for two years. A peon has also been arrested for alleged sexual misconduct. The police took action based on a complaint filed by the girl's mother. The girl told her family that she had been sexually assaulted on multiple occasions over the past two years. A court remanded the accused in judicial custody. The mother told the police that no action had been taken against the accused even after a complaint was made to the principal in January.

Delhi Police arrest 8 with alleged link to terror outfits

Six were arrested from Tamil Nadu and two from Bengal; one of them is a native of Malda and the remaining are said to be Bangladesh nationals; police say the eight were planning a major attack

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

The Special Cell of the Delhi Police has arrested eight persons with alleged links to terror organisations based in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the police said on Sunday.

Six of the suspects were arrested from Tamil Nadu and two from West Bengal. One of them is a native of West Bengal and the remaining are said to be Bangladesh nationals.

The arrests came even as security agencies issued an alert on Saturday on a possible explosion near the Red Fort.

'Objectionable posters'

"On February 7, some miscreants had affixed some objectionable posters at various Metro stations across Delhi. The Metro police immediately identified the miscreants and the routes they took for leaving the city. The case was formally transferred to the special cell on February 13. They were tracked down to Kolkata in West Bengal by a team of the special cell. Two persons, namely Umar Farukh and Robiul Islam, were arrested," said Pramod Singh Kushwaha, Additional Commissioner of Police of the special cell. Umar is said to be a resident of Malda in West Bengal and Robiul a Bangladesh national.

The Delhi Police Special Cell arrests two from West Bengal on Sunday in connection with a terror plot. ANI

The two had affixed posters in Delhi previously too, the officer added. According to the police, the two suspects were operating under a former terror handler, Shabbir Ahmad Lone, who is now based in Bangladesh. Lone had been arrested in 2007 and had connections with the Lashkar-e-Taiba. Upon release from prison in 2019, he restarted terrorist activities and established contact with the Lashkar, the police said.

Umar was allegedly in touch with Lone and had also travelled to Bangladesh to meet him.

The police said Umar recruited six other Bangladesh nationals working in Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu and conducted dry runs of pasting these posters across various cities in the country, including Delhi and Kolkata, on the commands of Lone.

Those arrested are said to be Bangladesh nationals and had been working in garment factories in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, the police said.

Umar and Robiul were staying at an expensive house in Kolkata, which was said to be their hideout. Interrogations revealed that they had planned to take the men working in Tamil Nadu to Kolkata and engage them in terror activities, the special cell said.

Attack plans

The phones recovered from the eight arrested revealed that they had done reconnaissance of different cities and were planning a major terror activity in heavy footfall and sensitive areas, Mr. Kushwaha said.

Umar was working at a garments factory in Kolkata. The six others arrested from Tamil Nadu were also employed in similar professions. He also had another connection in Bangladesh through whom he came into contact with persons in Tamil Nadu, the police said.

Tripura woman held captive, raped by live-in partner: family

The police rescued the young woman on February 19 after they received a call from her mother

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

Days after a young man was arrested by the Gurugram Police for allegedly beating his live-in partner, a 19-year-old woman belonging to Tripura, her mother has said that the accused held her daughter captive in a room for three days, raped her, and subjected her to brutal torture, inflicting burns and stab injuries.

Speaking to a news agency on Sunday, the woman said her daughter called her on February 19 night and told her about the ordeal.

"She told me that her friend Shivam had been torturing her for the past three days. She said that he would kill her that day. After that, I called the Badshahpur police station and they saved my daughter," said the victim's mother.

The young woman, under treatment in a hospital in Delhi, befriended the accused on a social media platform. She is a student of biotechnology at a prominent college in Gurugram. The accused, also aged 19, is a resident of Delhi's Narela.

According to the police, a team rescued the young woman on February 19 after they received a call from her mother and admitted her to a government hospital in Sector 10.

The victim told the police that she shared a room with the accused and he had suspected her conduct and repeatedly assaulted her.

Preliminary investigation had revealed that the victim and the accused had met last September and their families had even discussed their wedding, the police said.

Rape charges

Gurugram Police spokesperson Sandeep Kumar on Sunday said that the victim was under treatment and stable.

He said all relevant sections of law, including rape charges, had been invoked in the case based on a complaint of the victim and more sections could be added based on the opinion of the doctors treating her.

Security agencies issue alert on illegal use of satellite phones in Indian waters

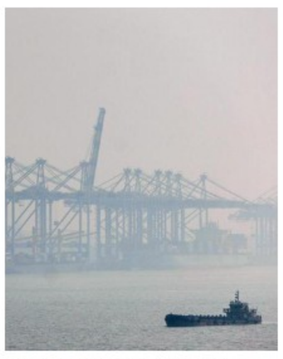
S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

Security agencies have issued an alert on the illegal use of satellite communication devices in Indian waters, terming it not only a violation of existing laws but also a potential threat to national security.

Acting on these inputs, the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) has proposed stricter penal provisions to prevent the unauthorised usage of the satellite communication channels.

Expressing concern, the DGS said security agencies continued to report instances of vessels and crew members carrying undeclared portable satellite communication devices, including satellite phones and satellite-enabled messaging equipment. Such incidents, it noted, were in clear violation of regulatory norms.

Security alerts also indicated the use of Zoleo satellite devices connected to smartphones compatible with Iridium satellite communication systems for messaging in areas without cellular network coverage. "Such actions constitute serious violations of existing orders and pose potential national security threats," the DGS said.



Agencies report vessels and crew carrying undeclared portable satellite devices.

The DGS now seeks to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements governing the use, declaration, authorisation and reporting of satellite communication equipment by ships and seafarers operating in Indian waters, in the interest of maritime safety and national security.

In an earlier order dated July 12, 2023, the DGS had permitted the use of Iridium-based satellite communication equipment in Indian waters exclusively for Distress and Safety Communications under the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), subject to specified conditions. However, the use of Thuraya satellite equipment continued to remain banned in Indian waters.

The DGS pointed out in the absence of Iridium gateways or ground stations within the Indian region – both on land and at sea – communications made using Iridium-based portable devices could not be effectively monitored, examined or traced.

"This limitation is of particular concern in suspicious or sensitive cases and underscores the necessity for strict compliance and enforcement," it stated.

Under existing rules, satellite communication equipment that was not part of a ship's GMDSS station and constituted the personal belongings of crew members or other individuals was not permitted for use in Indian waters or within Indian territory. Any such personal satellite devices found onboard must be placed under the custody of the Master (Captain) and sealed by Indian authorities upon arrival.

In a draft order issued recently calling for comments from stakeholders, the DGS stated any ship or vessel found violating rules related to satellite phone usage – including failure to declare or unauthorised use of satellite communication equipment – would be issued an infringement notice and face penal action under applicable Indian laws.

Biotechnology is set to drive evolution of personalised medicine, say experts

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

With the Centre announcing a massive investment of ₹10,000 crore in the Union Budget 2026-27 for the biotechnology sector, India is poised to become a global biopharma manufacturing hub, panellists at a webinar on "Biotech Education in Personalised Medicine" said on Sunday.

The aim is to focus on boosting the production of biologics and biosimilars through a new initiative called the Biopharma Shakti. This will be a huge space available to students who are planning to seek out careers in biotechnology, they added.

The timing is perfect and biotechnology is a stable and promising career because healthcare demand is always growing, and government support and investment are available along with strong opportunities in Indian and global job markets, said

Meenakshi Sinha, director at Cipla, lead advanced therapies and chief of staff to Global CEO & MD.

She was speaking at the webinar jointly organised by the Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai and *The Hindu* as part of the new series "Biotechnology: Role in Industry 5.0 Sustainable Future Pathways". The series aims to highlight the transformative role of biotechnology across healthcare, agriculture, environmental solutions, and research-led innovation.

S. Shridevi, Professor and Deputy Director, Centre for Neuroinformatics, VIT, Chennai, talked about core technologies such as generative, multimodal and reinforcing AI and deep and machine learning that were powering drug discovery. She said medical treatments were undergoing paradigm shift from reactive to proactive and standardised to individualised treatments based on genetic, metabolic, lifestyle, season, region, and ethnic profile of people.

"That is why biotechnology education is fast evolving and integrating genomics, bioinformatics, data since and clinical practice to prepare professionals for this transforming landscape of personalised medicine, based on genetic profiles of people," she said.

G. Jayaraman, Professor and Dean, School of Bio Sciences & Technology, VIT, Chennai, announced the launch of a new biotechnology programme for the academic year 2027 at VIT, Chennai that will introduce innovative and specialised strategies to make students industry-ready. He said bioinformatics and computational biology, along with programming and large datasets analysis, would play a key role in the development process of drugs in the future.

Parul Ganju, scientist-entrepreneur and co-founder and CEO of Ahammune Biosciences, highlighted how COVID-19 was the biggest game-changer in recent times. "Science shapes our lives," she said, "and biotechnology is now transforming human-centric innovations and sustainability."

Biotechnology is set to drive the evolution of personalised medicine by facilitating precise diagnosis, targeted therapies, and optimised drug selection and dosage, the panelists said.

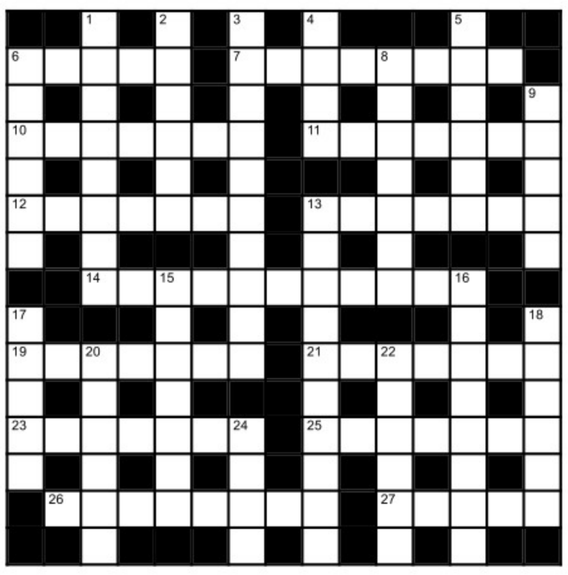
(The webinar is available at newsth.live/THVITBPY)

TH CROSSWORD + 14724

(set by Arden)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

6. Tries out from things for cleaning and grooming with a fabric (5)
7. Criminal chained in front of a Spanish villa (8)
10. Private joint - one enters (7)
11. Time to argue about subversion (7)
12. Barbaric, cruel, hosts providing for the devil (7)
13. Able to jump into a run-down theatre (7)
14. Strangely neutral about extra input - It's the ultimate (2,4,5)
19. Figure about taking people in Delhi to a German city (7)
21. Religious one - here at the centre, he was the first (7)
23. Said to be different amid all the noise - it's contempt (7)
25. Cocktail drinking - one with bottle opener is my brother (7)
26. Song Of Songs able to make you giggle, they say (8)
27. Criminals somewhat received jail sentence (5)

Down

1. By housing the sick is able to get a water boiler (8)
2. Rescue whistle blower's hidden story (6)
3. Yellowish green map, utilize again (10)
4. Go away with these territory markers (4)
5. Makes sense since a state doubled input (4,2)
6. Lets out but we are caught in a fight (6)
8. Others follow the first lady to the top of the world (7)
9. Come together as one, close to one (5)
13. Rear houses empty from top to bottom bed (4- 6)
15. Show servant with worker (7)
16. Copy right - it provided a welcome drink (8)
17. They're highly reactive like the odd adopted child (5)
18. Starts first in Delhi - internal set up is against congress (6)
20. Rascal masquerading as an old sailor (6)
22. Gold coins - where are they in circulation (6)
24. Not all electronic equipment is good (4)

SUDOKU

6	5						4	9
			9	4				
	1					7		
1			2			6		
2			7		3			4
		5			4			2
		1					3	
				8	2			
3	7						2	5

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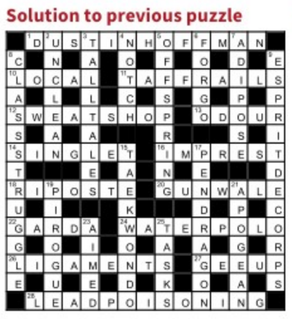
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

2	6	1	7	3	9	4	5	8
8	5	7	6	4	2	1	3	9
4	3	9	8	1	5	2	7	6
7	2	3	4	6	8	9	1	5
9	4	5	2	7	1	8	6	3
1	8	6	9	5	3	7	2	4
6	9	8	5	2	7	3	4	1
5	1	2	3	9	4	6	8	7
3	7	4	1	8	6	5	9	2

FAITH

The treasure of jnanis

Acharyas did not impart knowledge to a student randomly. A new sishya could not hope to be taught higher philosophy right at the outset. Several years would be spent by a sishya under the tutelage of an Acharya, before he would be taught esoteric philosophy. This was the usual practice – disciples being taught after they had served their Acharya sincerely for a long time. Even if a sishya had served an Acharya for many years, he would be taught, only if he had an eagerness to learn. But things changed with Ramanujacharya, said Elayavilli Sriram in a discourse. Whoever wanted to learn was taught by him, without keeping students waiting. So, he brought in a new system of teaching, benefiting students who had a desire to study. Thus, Ramanuja expanded the reach of the explanations for religious literature given by scholars.

Prativadhi Bhayankaram Annan wrote a suprabhatham for Ramanuja, where he uses the word *amalaswantha* to describe Ramanuja's purity. Like earlier Acharyas, Ramanuja too was aware of the greatness of sacred texts. But he saw the sorry state of grihasthas. He took pity on them and wanted to help them get liberated. He knew that if too many rules were laid down, people would be put off by all the rigidity. So, he relaxed some rules, to ensure that the scriptures reached everyone. Ramanuja can help us cross the ocean of samsara. On Panguni Uthiram, Ramanuja performed Saranagati in Srirangam. The Lord assured him that anyone associated with him would also attain liberation. Thus, a Ramanuja connection will save us. Prativadhi Bhayankaram Annan's Suprabhatham hails Ramanuja as the treasure of jnanis.

Guaranteed return plan

Pavit Laul

A decade ago, Sanjay, a salaried professional, locked his savings in a fixed deposit (FD). Last month, when it matured, he realised it did not really translate into what he expected. First, the maturity amount, when adjusted for tax and inflation, did not stretch as far as he had imagined. Second, he realised on account of lower interest rates, renewing FD meant much reduced returns in future. The plan did not deliver the financial milestone he was hoping for.

This is the story of millions of savers who are discovering that in today's financial environment, safety alone is no longer enough. What people increasingly seek is not just protection of capital, but protection of purchasing power and long-term financial goals. And this is where guaranteed return plans are gaining relevance among new-age investors.

Certainty as financial priority

While the focus was on maximising returns a few years earlier, today, it is equally on ensuring consistency. This shift is driven by factors such as sliding interest rates, market volatility and high lifestyle inflation. In such an environment, certainty itself becomes valuable. Guaranteed return plans are built around delivering that certainty.

For decades, FDs served as the go-to option for investors who wished to play safe. However, they carry two structural limitations. First, FD interest is fully taxable, which reduces effective compounding over time. A seemingly competitive rate can translate into lower post-tax returns, especially over long horizons. Second, FDs expose investors to reinvestment risk. When FD matures, there is no certainty same rates will be available. This combination can gradually weaken long-term financial planning.

Guaranteed return plans

These plans are long-term insurance-linked savings products that combine wealth creation with life protection. The returns are fixed and assured at the time of purchase and once locked in, they are unchanged for the entire policy span. The returns are unaffected by market movements or interest-rate cycles.

This clarity allows people to plan life goals such as a child's education, retirement income or financial security for the family. Currently, many guaranteed return plans offer returns up to 6.9-7%. The real USP of these plans lie in predictability as the returns do not fluctuate.

Also, maturity proceeds qualify for tax exemption under Section 10(10D), provided the aggregate annual premium across eligible policies don't exceed ₹5 lakh. This helps preserve returns without tax erosion, boosting long-term compounding compared with fully-taxable instruments. Also, premiums paid qualify for deductions under Section 80C, which improves tax efficiency.

The compounding effect

Suppose A invests ₹24 lakh in a FD with 6% interest and Investor B the same amount in a guaranteed return plan offering 6.9% tax-free returns. At the end of 10 years, Investor A's corpus would be much lower than Investor B's even before maturity tax cut. And when you adjust for taxation, the effective amount reduces further. Basically, FD returns are added to the taxable income and taxed as per your income slab. So, for those in 30% tax slab, FD proceeds will also be taxed at 30%. Investor B's maturity value, by contrast, stays largely preserved.

Securing dependents

Another feature is the built-in life cover in these plans. Guaranteed return plans include an insurance component providing financial protection to dependents. This dual structure of savings plus protection ensures that long-term goals remain safeguarded even in unforeseen circumstances even in the policyholder's absence.

Guaranteed return plans are not for replacing other investments. Equity-based assets are crucial for long-term growth and inflation participation. However, guaranteed return plans serve the distinct role of anchoring a portfolio with predictability, tax efficiency and long-term certainty.

(The writer is Head, Investments, Policybazaar.com)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

ILLUSTRATION: SAAI

Opportunities, risks in porting health policy

The facility to shift a health insurance policy from one insurer to another was unveiled in end 2011 by insurance regulator opening up options for insured to better terms elsewhere

TO SHIFT OR NOT?

K. Nitya Kalyani

A few days ago in this column, we examined the risks some insureds encountered while attempting to port hospitalisation policies. After paying the premium, they found themselves either without cover for a period or saddled with terms materially different from what they had proposed and paid for.

In this context, let us look at how you can port policy smoothly –what advantages you should leverage, and the risks and mistakes you should avoid.

Portability – the facility to shift a hospitalisation insurance policy from one insurer to another – was unveiled in end 2011 by the insurance regulator, opening up options for insured to better terms elsewhere and nudge insurers to focus on customer retention via fair pricing and improved service.

No simple exercise

The inspiration was mobile number portability implemented earlier in 2011 giving consumers unprecedented freedom. However, insurance is a far more complex. Porting a health policy was never meant to be a simple "walk in with KYC and switch" exercise, as in the case of mobiles.

Why would you want to port the policy? Primarily, to access better products, get wider coverage or more suitable policy terms with another insurer. This could

> In portability, the insurer has to carry forward key accrued benefits from existing policy — sum insured, no-claim bonus and credit built up towards completing waiting period for pre-existing diseases

mean broader risk cover, fewer restrictions, higher sum insured or more competitive pricing.

Equally crucial are service-related considerations – poor responsiveness, unsatisfactory TPA performance or an inadequate hospital network.

That said, porting is not a step to be taken lightly. Your new insurer has the right to accept/reject the proposal. Contrast this with your position with the existing insurer, who is obligated under norms to offer lifelong renewal, provided there is no fraud or material non-disclosure.

Portability does come with certain protections. The destination insurer has to carry forward key accrued benefits from the existing policy – sum insured, no-claim bonus and the credit built up towards completing waiting period for pre-existing diseases and specified treatments

The new insurer, however, is free to set its premium. This is often the very reason porting appears attractive. But as highlighted in the earlier article, it is crucial to ensure you have

> Porting is likely s to be smoother if one is young or middle-aged and sans major pre-existing conditions. For insurer, he/she represents lower risk with many premium-paying years ahead of the insured

firm, final terms and rates before letting the existing policy lapse. If this clarity is missing, it is safer to renew with the current insurer – on known, even if imperfect, terms – and work on porting the next year.

A few decision-making pointers may help.

Porting tends to be smoother if you are young or middle-aged and do not have major pre-existing conditions. From an underwriting perspective, you represent a lower risk with many premium-paying years ahead, making acceptance more likely.

In such cases, porting can be a good opportunity to move to policies with better coverage, fewer sublimits (such as on room rent) or more favourable pricing.

On the other hand, if the current insurer provided good service – prompt claim settlements, reliable TPA support – and you are close to completing waiting periods for pre-existing conditions, continuity itself has value. In such situations, porting may not be the optimal choice.

Instead, consider increasing sum insured with the same insurer, or adding a top-up or super top-up policy. The options typically need no fresh medical underwriting, avoid unpleasant surprises and allow you to continue seamlessly with an insurer you already know. This approach also works well if you have employer-provided base cover and are building personal health insurance alongside it.

Retirement age

For those approaching or past retirement age, porting can be particularly risky. The outcomes may include outright rejection, sharply higher premiums, or additional exclusions and conditions. Staying with the existing insurer preserves the right to lifelong renewability – a benefit that should not be underestimated in today's health cover landscape.

Here again, top-ups and super top-ups are efficient ways to expand coverage. When accepted, they offer a significantly lower premium per rupee of sum insured compared with a base policy.

Finally, remember this distinction: porting policy is your right, but underwriting remains the insurer's right. In the coming articles in this column, we will outline a practical game plan and decision matrix to help you navigate this process with clarity and confidence.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

On alpha fade rate

THINKINVESTOR

Alpha fade rate refers to the gradual decay in the alpha strategy. This is because rate at which an alpha strategy fades can be faster than the rate at which a newer alpha strategy can be developed

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

We had discussed why popularity is not necessarily good (alpha scalability) when it comes to active fund investing. Now, look at a related characteristic viz. alpha fade rate.

Alpha decay

Alpha fade rate refers to the gradual decay in the alpha strategy. This happens because the rate at which an alpha strategy fades can be faster than the rate at which a newer alpha strategy can be developed. Why?

Alpha is the excess returns that a portfolio generates over its appropriate benchmark. An alpha strategy is a rule a portfolio manager applies to create a portfolio from the investable universe to generate positive alpha. Suppose a portfolio's investment universe is the 100 large-cap stocks. An alpha strategy can be a combination of fundamental factors such as profit margin, five-year sales growth and net profit growth of firms in the universe and technical factors such as each stock's price volatility and trading volumes. A portfolio manager and investment team will arrive at an optimal combination of these factors to help them generate alpha returns.

But why should alpha fade? Significant changes to market norms over the years reduced information asymmetry – market participants have access to the same company information. Using this information to test an alpha strategy is easy because of cheap computing power. This means a level-playing field among market participants, especially the institutional investors. Even if one portfolio manager beats the others to designing a new strategy, it may not be long before the others catch up. When many institutions follow the same strategy, it will eventually fade. Note, a strategy must be unique to be able to generate the alpha. Therein lies the problem.

Conclusion

Creating new alpha strategy may not the issue. Rather, the problem is in applying the strategy to the same universe of stocks. Suppose a portfolio manager applies 10 factors to pick stocks and another applies a different set of factors. If both are large-cap managers, they will apply the rule to the same 100 stocks. So, it is highly likely both buy similar stocks, despite applying different set of rules. When a large cohort of managers take similar action, consistently generating alpha becomes difficult. This is true in markets such as the U.S., but emerging markets such as India may not be far behind. You must be mindful of this factor when you buy active funds.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals for managing their personal investments)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%) Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	7.10	6.35	7.10	6.75
Equitas Small Finance Bank	7.20	6.90	7.00	7.00
ESAF Small Finance Bank	7.60	4.75	6.00	5.75
Jana Small Finance Bank	7.77	7.00	7.50	7.77
Shivalik Small Finance Bank	7.50	6.00	6.75	6.25
slice Small Finance Bank	7.75	6.25	7.50	7.00
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	7.90	7.25	7.25	7.90
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	7.45	7.25	7.20	7.20
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	7.50	6.00	7.50	7.00
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	6.45	6.25	6.45	6.45
Bandhan Bank	7.20	7.00	7.00	5.85
City Union Bank	7.00	6.80	6.50	6.25
CSB Bank	7.00	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	6.60	6.30	6.40	6.25
DCB Bank	7.15	6.90	7.00	7.15
Federal Bank	6.70	6.25	6.70	6.40
HDFC Bank	6.45	6.25	6.45	6.40
ICICI Bank	6.50	6.25	6.45	6.50
IDFC FIRST Bank	7.00	6.30	7.00	7.00
IndusInd Bank	7.00	6.75	6.90	6.65
Jammu & Kashmir Bank	7.25	6.75	6.65	6.60
IDBI Bank	6.55	6.20	6.35	6.25
Karnataka Bank	6.65	6.50	6.15	6.15
Kotak Mahindra Bank	6.70	6.50	6.40	6.25
RBL Bank	7.20	7.00	7.20	6.70
SBM Bank India	7.30	7.10	7.10	7.00
South Indian Bank	6.60	6.35	6.20	5.70
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	7.10	6.80	6.60	6.60
YES Bank	7.00	6.65	7.00	6.75
Public Sector Banks				
Bank of Baroda	6.45	6.10	6.25	6.30
Bank of India	6.70	6.25	6.25	6.00
Bank of Maharashtra	6.65	6.20	5.25	5.00
Canara Bank	6.50	6.25	6.25	6.25
Central Bank of India	6.50	6.20	6.00	6.00
Indian Bank	6.45	6.10	6.05	6.00
Indian Overseas Bank	6.60	6.50	6.10	6.10
Punjab National Bank	6.40	6.10	6.30	6.10
Punjab & Sind Bank	6.75	5.85	5.85	5.95
State Bank of India	6.45	6.25	6.30	6.05
Union Bank of India	6.60	6.30	6.25	6.00

Source:Paisabazaar.com

Rates as on Feb.17

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.) Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
	(In %)		
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	7.25-8.70	7.25-8.70	7.25-8.70
Bank of Baroda	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.25
Union Bank of India*	7.15-9.50	7.15-9.50	7.15-9.50
Punjab National Bank	7.25-9.10	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.00
Bank of India	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.25
Bank of Maharashtra	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90
Punjab and Sind Bank	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70
Indian Overseas Bank	7.10 #	7.10 #	7.10 #
Indian Bank	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55
Central Bank of India	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	7.70 #	7.70 #	7.70 #
ICICI Bank	7.45 #	7.45 #	7.45 #
Axis Bank	8.00-11.90	8.00-11.90	8.00 - 9.10
HSBC Bank	7.45 #	7.45 #	7.45 #
South Indian Bank	7.80 #	7.80 #	7.80 #
Karur Vysya Bank	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65
Karnataka Bank	7.30-11.68	7.30-11.68	7.30-11.68
Federal Bank	7.50 - 9.50	7.50 - 9.50	7.50 - 9.50
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	7.90 - 9.30	7.90 - 9.30	7.90 - 9.30
Bandhan Bank	8.41-12.58	8.41-12.58	8.41-12.58
RBL Bank	8.20 #	8.20 #	8.20 #
CSB Bank	8.05 #	8.05 #	8.05 #
HDFC Bank	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #
City Union Bank	8.25-9.50	8.50-10.00	8.75-10.50
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
LIC Housing Finance	7.15 #	7.15 #	7.15 #
Bajaj Housing Finance	7.15 #	7.15 #	7.15 #
Tata Capital	7.50 #	7.50 #	7.50 #
PNB Housing Finance	7.50 #	7.50 #	7.50 #
GIC Housing Finance	8.20 #	8.20 #	8.20 #
SMFG India Home Finance	10.00 #	10.00 #	10.00 #
Sammaan Capital	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
Aditya Birla Capital	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #
ICICI Home Finance	7.50 #	7.50 #	7.50 #
Godrej Housing Finance	7.60 #	7.60 #	7.60 #

(In %)

*Extra rate cut of 0.05% to borrowers opting for insurance
Rates as on Feb.18 #onwards Source:Paisabazaar.com

TEL AVIV

U.S. says envoy's remark on Israel and West Asia taken out of context

REUTERS

An uproar continued on Sunday after the U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, said Israel has a right to much of West Asia as more Arab and Muslim countries objected. A spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy said Mr. Huckabee's comments were taken out of context and that there is no change to U.S. policies on Israel. AP

SEOUL

South Korea condemns Japan for hosting event over disputed islands

REUTERS

South Korea on Sunday objected to the Takeshima Day event held by Japan's Shimane prefecture, calling it an unjust assertion of sovereignty over its territory. The cluster of disputed islands, known as Takeshima in Japan and Dokdo in South Korea, have long been a source of tension between the two neighbours. REUTERS

CARACAS

Over 1,500 prisoners seek amnesty under Venezuela's new legislation

REUTERS

At least 1,557 political prisoners in Venezuela have applied for amnesty under a new law, the head of the country's legislature Jorge Rodriguez said on Saturday, two days after the measure — enacted under pressure from Washington — came into effect. On Saturday alone, 80 prisoners had been freed from detention. AFP

BEIRUT

IS claims recent attacks in Syria, declares 'new phase' of operations

AP

Islamic State claimed responsibility on Saturday for two attacks targeting Army personnel in Syria, as the militant group signalled renewed operations. The group said it had begun a "new phase of operations" in Syria, describing President Ahmed al-Sharaa as a "watchdog" of a 'Turkish-American' coalition. REUTERS

Pakistan claims at least 70 militants killed in strikes along Afghan border

Islamabad says it hit hideouts of Pakistani militants it blamed for recent attacks inside the country; Afghan Defence Ministry calls the strikes a violation of country's sovereignty; locals claim those killed were neither Taliban nor military personnel

Associated Press
KABUL

Pakistan's military killed at least 70 militants in strikes along the border with Afghanistan early on Sunday, targeting what it described as hideouts of Pakistani militants it blamed for recent attacks inside the country.

Talal Chaudhry, Pakistan's Deputy Interior Minister, told Geo News that at least 70 militants were killed. He offered no evidence. Pakistan's state-run media later reported that militant casualties from the strikes jumped to 80.

The Afghanistan Defence Ministry said in a statement that "various civilian areas" in the provinces of Nangarhar and Paktika in eastern Afghanistan were hit, including multiple civilian homes.

The statement called the strikes a violation of Afghanistan's airspace and sovereignty.

In the crosshairs: People attend the funeral of victims of the strikes in Nangarhar's Behsud district in Afghanistan on Sunday. AP

Civilians killed

Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid earlier on X said the attacks "killed and wounded dozens, including women and children."

Mawlawi Fazl Rahman Fayyaz, the provincial director of the Afghan Red Crescent Society in Nangarhar province, said 18 people were killed and several others wounded.

Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Pakistan's Ambassador to Kabul and handed him a note of protest over the Pakistani strikes.

In a statement, the Ministry said protecting Afghanistan's territory is the Islamic Emirate's "Sharia responsibility" and warned that Pakistan would be responsible for the consequences of such attacks.

On Sunday, villagers were seen clearing rubble in Nangarhar following airstrikes, while mourners were preparing for funerals of those killed. Habib Ullah, a local tribal elder, said those killed were not militants. "They were poor people who suffered greatly. Those killed were neither Taliban, nor military personnel, nor members of the former government," he said.

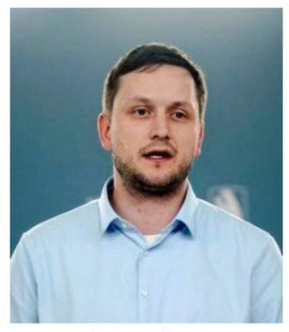
Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar wrote on X that the military conducted "intelligence-based, selective operations" against seven camps belonging to the Pakistani Taliban, or TTP, and its affiliates.

'No thanks': Greenland PM rejects Trump's hospital ship

Agence France-Presse
COPENHAGEN

Denmark and its territory Greenland on Saturday rejected Donald Trump's offer to send a naval hospital ship to the Arctic island coveted by the U.S. President.

A day earlier, Mr. Trump said he was sending "a great hospital boat to Greenland to take care of the many people who are sick, and not being taken care of there".



Jens-Frederik Nielsen

'Healthcare is free'

But Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen, who heads the autonomous territory's government, wrote on his Facebook page: "That will be 'no thanks' from us."

"President Trump's idea to send a U.S. hospital ship here to Greenland has been duly noted. But we have a public health system where care is free for citizens," he said.

Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen likewise told Danish broadcaster DR: "The Greenlandic population receives the healthcare it needs. They receive it either in Greenland, or, if they require specialised treatment, they receive it in Denmark."

He added: "It's not as if there's a need for a special healthcare initiative in Greenland."

On the day that Mr. Trump made his proposal, Danish forces evacuated a crew member of a U.S. submarine off the coast of Greenland's capital Nuuk after the sailor requested urgent medical attention.

In Greenland, as in Denmark, access to healthcare is free for citizens.Without explicitly mentioning the U.S. proposal, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said she was "happy to live in a country where access to healthcare is free and equal for all".

Mr. Trump, in his Truth Social message on Saturday about the hospital ship, posted an AI-generated image of a U.S. Navy medical vessel, USNS Mercy. "It's on the way!!!" he added.

Man shot dead after trying to access Trump Florida estate

Agence France-Presse
MIAMI

U.S. Secret Service agents and a Sheriff's deputy fatally shot a man armed with a shotgun who breached the security perimeter of President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Mr. Trump was in Washington at the time of the incident, which officials said happened around 1.30 a.m. (06:30 GMT).

Suspect armed

The suspect, a man in his early 20s, was spotted by the north gate of the Mar-a-Lago property, carrying a shot gun and a fuel, the Secret Service said.

Agents confronted the man and told him to disarm, but the man raised his gun. "The only words that we said to him was 'drop the items' which means the gas can and the shotgun," Palm Beach County sheriff Ric Bradshaw told reporters.

The U.S. President was in Washington at the time of the incident

"At which time he put down the gas can, raised the shotgun to a shooting position," Mr. Bradshaw said.

A deputy and two Secret Service agents then shot him. The individual was pronounced deceased and no U.S. officers were injured. The Secret Service said no one under its protection was present in Mar-a-Lago at the time. The was no immediate reaction from the White House. The name of the suspect in the Sunday incident has not been released while officials attempt to contact his relatives.

Mr. Trump, who often spends his weekends in Mar-a-Lago, has been the target of several assassination plots or attempts.

Earlier this month, Ryan Routh, 59, who plotted to assassinate the President at a Florida golf course in September 2024, two months before the U.S. election, was sentenced to life in prison.

Mr. Routh's planned attack on Mr. Trump came two months after an assassination attempt on the Republican leader in Pennsylvania, where 20-year-old Matthew Crooks fired several shots during a rally, one of them grazing Mr. Trump's right ear.

Iran has right to self-defence if U.S. attacks, says Araghchi

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Iran's top diplomat said on Sunday that his country would strike back at U.S. interests in West Asia in the event of an attack, though he still saw a chance for a diplomatic resolution.

Speaking to U.S. broadcaster CBS, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said he expected new talks on the details of a deal, "probably" on Thursday, amid Washington's military build-up in the region.

"If the U.S. attacks us, then we have every right to defend ourselves," Mr. Araghchi said, alluding to American interests in the region as potential targets.

Still, he said, "there is a good chance to have a diplomatic solution".

Russian drone, missile barrage pounds energy, rail infrastructure across Ukraine

Agence France-Presse
KYIV

Russia fired scores of missiles and drones at targets across Ukraine on Sunday, crashing into energy and rail infrastructure and residential buildings, just two days before the fourth anniversary of Moscow's all-out invasion.

"Moscow continues to invest in strikes more than in diplomacy," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said of the attack, adding that Russia launched about 50 missiles and 300 drones overnight.

"The main target of the attack was the energy sector. Ordinary residential buildings were also damaged, and there is damage to the railway."

First response: Firefighters at the site of a residential building damaged during Russian strikes in Kyiv, Ukraine on Sunday. REUTERS

The intense barrage came the same day Hungary said it would block the EU's latest package of sanctions against Russia, unless Ukraine re-opens a key oil pipeline that supplies the country. Ukraine says the Druzhba pipeline that crosses its territory to deliver Russian oil to Slovakia and Hungary was damaged late January by Russian strikes. In Kyiv and its region, the Sunday overnight strikes killed one man and wounded a dozen more.

1 killed in 'terror attack'

It also came hours after blasts in Lviv, a western city near the Polish border that rarely sees deadly attacks. Explosions ripped through a central shopping street at around midnight, killing a policewoman and wounding 25 people after officers responded to a reported break in.

"This is clearly an act of terrorism," Mayor Andriy Sadovyi said, offering no details on perpetrators.

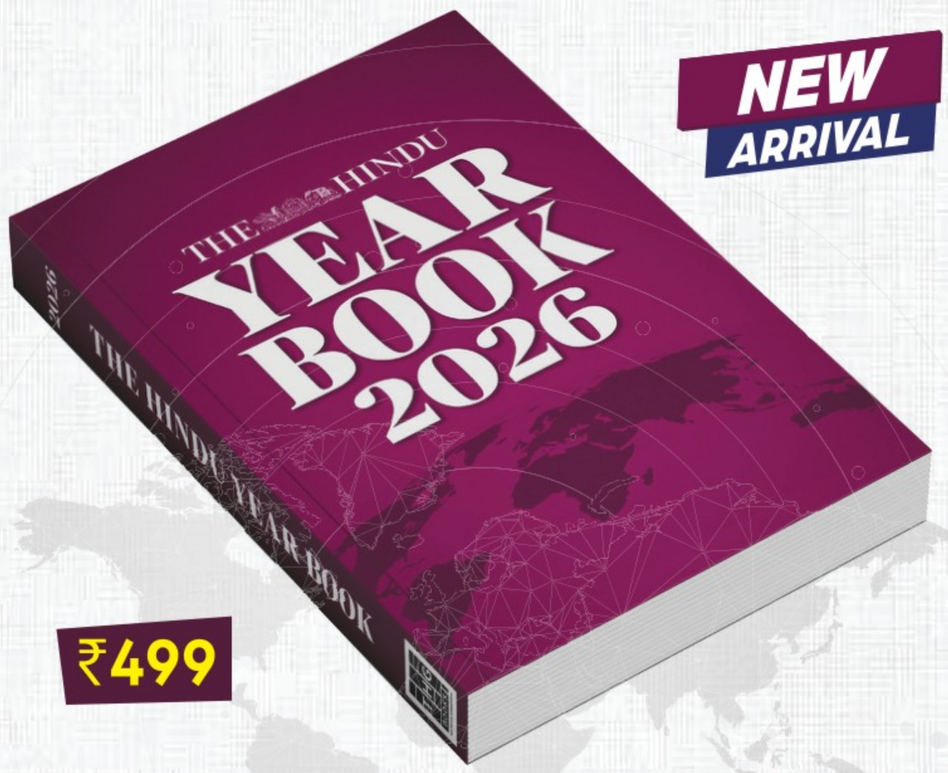
THE HINDU GROUP

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION FROM THE HINDU GROUP

The Hindu Year Book 2026

provides chronological, contextual, and factual information on the key events that occupied public attention **between January and December 2025.**

It features a Calendar of Events with Profiles of People, and Data on India and the World. Expert essays cover critical topics such as like AI and the Indus Waters Treaty, while dedicated sections analyse global governance, economy, and sports through evocative photographs and factual reporting.



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CANDID

We could have batted better, but it's part of the game: Suryakumar

VIJAY SONEJI

Sometimes you have to think you cannot win the game in the PowerPlay but you can lose it. We did not have the partnerships we needed. We could have batted better. It's part of the game. We will learn from it and bounce back. Hopefully, bat well, bowl well and field well. Keep it simple — Suryakumar Yadav, India skipper.

CRUSHING DEFEAT

India suffers its biggest loss by runs in T20 World Cup history

VIJAY SONEJI

The 76-run loss to South Africa was India's biggest by runs in the T20 World Cup. The 49-run defeat at the hands of Australia in 2010 was the previous worst performance by the Men in Blue. Sunday's loss was also India's second-biggest defeat by runs in the shortest format behind the 80-run defeat to the Kiwis in Wellington in 2019.

NO EXCUSES

Some of us have played in India, but a majority haven't: Raza

AP

Skipper Sikandar Raza stressed that Zimbabwe, despite playing in India after 10 years, will not offer lack of experience in Indian conditions as an excuse. "Some of us have played here (in India) but a majority haven't. But it's not down to the fast outfield. If anything, I think the weather is slightly more pleasant here," said Raza.

KEEP GOING

Bennett's role is to bat as long as he can, says Zimbabwe skipper

AFP

Brian Bennett is Brian Bennett. His role is just to bat as long as he can. While you may think I am being funny, but only people who understand Brian would know what I am talking about. Brian must just bat... if that means batting 20 overs, 18 overs, 15 overs, it doesn't matter — Sikandar Raza, Zimbabwe captain.

All-round Proteas bring Men in Blue crashing down

Miller, Brevis and Stubbs power South Africa to 187 for seven after the loss of three early wickets; the Indian batting unit comes a cropper as the defending champion's 12-match winning run ends

Putting on a show: Miller counterattacked before Stubbs cut loose at the death to take Proteas to a big total. Jansen was the wrecker-in-chief with four scalps. VIJAY SONEJI

T20 WORLD CUP

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA

Aiden Markram c Hardik b Arshdeep 4 *(7b)*, Quinton de Kock b Bumrah 6 *(7b, 1x4)*, Ryan Rickelton c Dube b Bumrah 7 *(7b, 1x6)*, Dewald Brevis c Abhishek b Dube 45 *(29b, 3x4, 3x6)*, David Miller c Tilak b Varun 63 *(35b, 7x4, 3x6)*, Tristan Stubbs (not out) 44 *(24b, 1x4, 3x6)*, Marco Jansen c Rinku b Arshdeep 2 *(6b)*, Corbin Bosch c & b Bumrah 5 *(6b, 1x4)*, Kagiso Rabada (not out) 0 *(1b)*; Extras (b-1, lb-2, nb-2, w-6): 11; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 187.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-10 (de Kock, 1.5 overs), 2-12 (Markram, 2.4), 3-20 (Rickelton, 3.6), 4-117 (Brevis, 12.2), 5-152 (Miller, 15.4), 6-158 (Jansen, 17.2), 7-167 (Bosch, 18.5).

INDIA BOWLING

Arshdeep 4-0-28-2, Bumrah 4-0-15-3, Varun 4-0-47-1, Washington 2-0-17-0, Hardik 4-0-45-0, Dube 2-0-32-1.

INDIA

Ishan Kishan c Rickelton b Markram 0 *(4b)*, Abhishek Sharma c Bosch b Jansen 15 *(12b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Tilak Varma c de Kock b Jansen 1 *(2b)*, Suryakumar Yadav c Brevis b Bosch 18 *(22b, 2x4)*, Washington Sundar c de Kock b Bosch 11 *(11b, 1x6)*, Shivam Dube c Ngidi b Jansen 42 *(37b, 1x4, 3x6)*, Hardik Pandya c Stubbs b Maharaj 18 *(17b, 1x6)*, Rinku Singh c Stubbs b Maharaj 0 *(2b)*, Arshdeep Singh c Stubbs b Maharaj 1 *(2b)*, Varun Chakaravarthy (not out) 0 *(3b)*, Jasprit Bumrah c Markram b Jansen 0 *(1b)*; Extras (lb-1, w-4): 5; Total (in 18.5 overs): 111.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-0 (Kishan, 0.4), 2-5 (Tilak, 1.1), 3-26 (Abhishek, 4.3), 4-43 (Washington, 7.2), 5-51 (Suryakumar, 9.1), 6-86 (Hardik, 14.1), 7-86 (Rinku, 14.3), 8-88 (Arshdeep, 14.6), 9-111 (Dube, 18.4).

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING

Markram 1-0-5-1, Jansen 3.5-0-22-4, Rabada 4-0-32-0, Ngidi 4-0-15-0, Maharaj 3-0-24-3, Bosch 3-0-12-2.

Toss: South Africa; **PoM:** Miller.
South Africa won by 76 runs.
India's next match: **February 26** vs. Zimbabwe, Chennai, 7 p.m.

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
AHMEDABAD

A Sunday night that commenced on a boisterous note lapsed into silence as the hours ebbed away at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Defending champion India suffered its first defeat in the current T20 World Cup as South Africa emphatically won the Super Eight Group 1 match by 76 runs.

Meek surrender

Pursuing South Africa's 187 for seven, the Men in Blue were bundled out for 111 in 18.5 overs. During the chase, India suffered a double blow up front. Ishan Kishan and Tilak Varma rushed their shots against Aiden Markram and Marco Jansen, respectively, and retreated to the hut.

Meanwhile, Abhishek Sharma guided Markram for four and his clenched fist was an instant sign of relief after being stuck on zero in his previous three outings.

There was hope when Suryakumar Yadav etched his fours and Abhishek upper-cut a six off Kagiso Rabada.

Just as the crowd regained its voice, Abhishek spooned a catch off Jansen, and the Indian think-tank promoted Washington Sundar to seal the cracks.

The southpaw hung around, smote Keshav Maharaj for six, and then edged Corbin Bosch. And once captain Suryakumar too perished to the seamer, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, and the rest, were left with too steep a mountain to climb.

Earlier, Markram won the toss and opted to bat while a sea of blue flowed into the massive venue. After an economical first over from Arshdeep Singh, the South African skipper watched fellow-opener Quinton de Kock strike Jasprit Bumrah for a four, and get castled off the very next delivery.

Markram followed suit, popping a catch off Arshdeep, and the Proteas were unsettled when Ryan Rickelton too departed.

Having pulled a six off Arshdeep, the batter lobbed Bumrah's slower delivery, straight to an eager Dube. From three for 20, the visitors found some relief through David Miller's fours. Miller (63) was decisive in his shots, and that attitude rubbed onto Dewald Brevis too.

Both hit a six each off Varun Chakaravarthy as a partnership took shape for the fourth wicket.

Dube, too, was toyed around until Brevis miscued a shot and that concluded the 97-run alliance.

However, Miller soldiered on and the Indians turned erratic. The southpaw finally holed out in the deep while trying to plunder Varun.

Bumrah excels

The host pulled back at the death, thanks to Bumrah, even as Tristan Stubbs swung his bat and helped the Proteas register a score that stayed well beyond India's reach.

'We thought this was the best XI'

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
AHMEDABAD

India's inexplicable meltdown against South Africa shifted attention to the team composition. During the post-match press conference at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Sunday, assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate conceded that World Cups never come easy.

Fine line

Reacting to vice-captain Axar Patel's omission, ten Doeschate said: "We have the highest regard for Axar. It is just that in the case of match-ups against left-handed batters, we thought this was the best XI, especially our bowlers. It is a thin line, do we go with an extra batter or an extra bowler?"

On Abhishek Sharma's form, ten Doeschate explained: "The other day too I said how he is in good rhythm in the nets. Yes three zeroes can weigh you down, he is trying his best. Yes we have been losing wickets early. There is also some inexperience in the ranks, we are trying to address all that. We have to be careful while apportioning blame."

Keeping it simple

Meanwhile, David Miller, who rescued South Africa with a superb knock, said: "In front of a large audience, you try to do the simple things. This game is a game of risks and as a cricketer you play to your terms. Today was an all-round great performance."

He stressed that India is beatable. "We just got to stay in our lane and do our plans. Against Varun Chakaravarthy we did our best. He is a world-class bowler but we took our chances. Getting 187 on (the) board and getting those early wickets helped us".

A struggle: Abhishek's form is a big concern for India. VIJAY SONEJI

Salt and Jacks star in England's comprehensive win over Lanka

Abhishek Saini
PALLEKELE

Phil Salt (62, 40b, 6x4, 2x6) curbed his instinct for big hits and adapted to a slow surface at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium here on Sunday to set up England's 51-run victory over Sri Lanka in the T20 World Cup Super Eight clash.

Salt's effort allowed England to survive a top-order slide and post 146 runs for nine. In reply, Sri Lanka folded up for 95 after Will Jacks' three strikes in the PowerPlay sent the chase into a tailspin.

After England was put in, Salt's attempt to clear long off against Dunith Wellalage off his third ball hinted at his mood to attack. But he was mindful to recalibrate after Jos Buttler's reverse hit went awry and pinned him in front.

Salt reverted to picking pockets of space in the outfield to collect doubles for a major part, bringing up his fifty off 35 balls. But the quick running between the wickets eventually cost him too. Running out of gas in humid conditions, his waft off Wellalage could only be hit with stationary feet and ended up only as far as long off. Jacks once again injected late momentum and prolonged the innings, going over covers for four fours.

Turning point: Jacks' three strikes in the PowerPlay sent the chase into a tailspin. AP

Sri Lanka's response never really recovered from the five wickets it lost in the PowerPlay for just 34 runs. The in-form Pathum Nissanka was the first to depart, putting his flick from outside the off-stump against Jofra Archer straight to the trap laid at deep midwicket.

Jacks then pushed Sri Lanka to a point of no return with the wickets of Kusal Mendis, Pavan Rathnayake, and Wellalage.

Skipper Dasun Shanaka refused to throw in the towel. He smoked Jacks over midwicket and lofted Liam Dawson down the ground. But losing partners at the other end, he could only take Sri Lanka so far.

The scores: England 146/9 in 20 overs (Phil Salt 62, Dilshan Madushanka 2/25, Dunith Wellalage 3/26, Maheesh Theekshana 2/21) bt Sri Lanka 95 in 16.4 overs (Dasun Shanaka 30, Jofra Archer 2/20, Will Jacks 3/22, Liam Dawson 2/27, Adil Rashid 2/13). **Toss:** Sri Lanka; **PoM:** Jacks.

West Indies meets Zimbabwe in a battle between high-flying teams

SUPER EIGHT

Today's match

Mumbai, 7 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 4

Zimbabwe 1 | West Indies 3

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & JIOHOTSTAR

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

It has been exactly a decade since Zimbabwe last played an international match in India. Back in 2016, while Daren Sammy-led West Indies scripted history by becoming the first team to win two World T20 titles, Zimbabwe exited in the preliminary round.

On Monday at the Wankhede Stadium, the two sides reunite in far different circumstances. Sikandar Raza's Zimbabwe takes on West Indies – with Sammy as the head coach – in the Super Eights of the Men's T20 World Cup.

For two teams that spent much of the past decade labelled as international cricket's also-rans, topping their respective groups and meeting at this stage marks a significant shift. It signals progress for both Caribbean and Zimbabwean cricket, and underlines the expanding footprint of the T20 game beyond its traditional power centres.

Zimbabwe has been the fairytale of the tournament. A stunning win over Australia sealed a Super Eights berth – and a rare return to Indian soil – before they underlined their credentials by beating co-host Sri Lanka to finish atop the group.

The challenge now is adaptation. Only Raza and left-arm spinner Wellington Masakadza remain from the 2016 squad that last toured India. The transition from the slower, lower pitches in Sri Lanka to the typically flatter Wankhede surface will test their adaptability. Unsurprisingly, despite the momentum, Zimbabwe will begin as underdogs.

It is also monitoring the fitness of left-arm pacer Richard Ngarava. West Indies, meanwhile, has been bolstered by the return of Romario Shepherd, who missed the final two league matches with a niggle. Sammy confirmed Shepherd is available for selection, with the all-rounder bowling an extended spell in training on Sunday.

West Indies may not have anticipated Zimbabwe in their Super Eights opener, but they have had time to recalibrate. The question now is whether Zimbabwe can script a third successive upset – or whether experience will prevail.

Back in the swing: West Indies will be eager to have Shepherd's services again. EMMANUAL YOGINI

> We are going to see if all of us can help one another with our notes from training and put our best foot forward against the West Indies
>
> **SIKANDAR RAZA**
> Zimbabwe skipper

Pre-seedings imbroglio: Sammy empathises with the organisers

The West Indies head coach says logistics was probably taken into consideration; he stresses that if his team has to win, it has to play what's in front of it and not take any rival for granted

T20 WORLD CUP

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Clear-headed: Sammy says that if the teams start to discuss too many things, focus will be shifted.
FILE PHOTO: EMMANUAL YOGINI

The system of pre-seedings has come in for widespread criticism with all the group toppers at the Men's T20 World Cup having been clubbed together in the same Super Eights group.

While doing his best to dead-bat the issue, Daren Sammy, the West Indies head coach, sounded empathetic with the organisers taking logistics into consideration.

"In sports, you seldom get the top teams in the same round. My team knows they just have to play (in) a World Cup.

"We have got Zimbabwe tomorrow, we have got South Africa and then India," Sammy said at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday, ahead of its Super Eight opener against giant-killer Zimbabwe on Monday.

"We have got finalists of the last World Cup (in the same group). If you are going to win, you have got to play what's in front of you. Not take it for granted, not take anybody lightly.

"If you start to bring in other factors, it takes you off-track on your focus. For us, our focus is Zimbabwe tomorrow and (to) do everything in our power to come out victorious."

When asked whether the International Cricket Council (ICC) should reconsider pre-seedings in order to avoid top teams in the same group in future, Sammy said: "If you take the logistics that comes into it, trying to give the fans who probably travel, an opportunity to plan ahead," Sammy said.

"I am pretty sure Zimbabwe looking at that group there gave them motivation and inspiration to come out and play the way they played.

"But I do understand from the logistics standpoint. Trying to give the fans the surety. That's not my thing (to decide)."

Triumphant: The victorious India-A women's team. ACC

Tejal and Prema steal the show as India-A wins Rising Stars title

Press Trust of India
BANGKOK

Tejal Hasanbis made an impactful unbeaten 51 off 34 balls on a slow turner before leg-spinner Prema Rawat made the ball talk as India-A outplayed Bangladesh- A by a whopping 46 runs in a low-scoring final to defend the ACC Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars here on Sunday.

At 44 for four, India was in trouble but Hasanbis, who has played ODIs for India, and captain Radha Yadav, another international, (36 off 30) shared an 89-run stand for the fifth wicket to lift their team to 134 for seven in 20 overs.

The Radha-led side comfortably defended by bowling out Bangladesh for 88 in 19.1 overs.

The star with the ball was Prema (three for 12), who was part of RCB's triumphant campaign in the recently played WPL.

The scores: India-A 134/7 in 20 overs (Tejal Hasanbis 51 n.o., Radha Yadav 36, Fahima Khatun 4/25) bt Bangladesh-A 88 in 19.1 overs (Prema Rawat 3/12). **Toss**: India-A . **PoM**: Tejal Hasanbis.

The Indian team wants to be consistent and dominate world cricket, says Smriti

Press Trust of India
ADELAIDE

Indian women's team wants to consistently stay at the top and dominate world cricket, said vice-captain Smriti Mandhana.

Riding high on their maiden 50-over World Cup triumph, the Women in Blue have now set their sights on winning the T20 World Cup later this year.

They began the year with a T20 series win against Australia, their first series triumph over the formidable rivals in a decade. "This Indian team is trying to be consistent. Don't think about the opposition or what's happened in the past," Smriti said on BCCI.tv.

"I think we are on the verge of a transition where we want to dominate world cricket. We just want to be consistent in beating them and being at the top,"

The women's T20 World Cup is slated to be held in England and Wales from June 12 to July 5.

"This year is a T20 year. Last year was a one-day year where we played a lot of one-day cricket. So coming into this year, for sure, I feel like we are a well-settled ODI squad, but we are still working on our T20 game and also what's our best XI and what's our best 15 in terms of T20s."

India-Australia T20I series in numbers

BATTING	M	Runs	HS	SR	50s
Smriti	3	129	82	134.37	1
Voll	3	116	88	161.11	1
BOWLING	**M**	**Wkts**	**BB**	**Econ**	**4W**
Arundhati	3	8	4/22	7.25	1
Shree Charani	3	5	3/32	7.40	0

Penalty shootout heartbreak for India against Australia

PRO LEAGUE

Press Trust of India
HOBART

Consolation: The draw meant India opened its account in the campaign, after five straight losses. FIH

The Indian men's hockey team dished out a much improved show but still went down to Australia in the penalty shootout in their FIH Pro League match here on Sunday.

The two sides were tied 2-2 after full time with Amit Rohidas (15th) and Jugraj Singh (43rd) putting India in front before a brace from Joel Rintala (47th, 56th) helped Australia get back on level terms.

In the shootout, though, Australia emerged 5-4 victorious.

This was after India lost five matches in a row in the FIH Pro League this year, including four in the home leg in Rourkela. It lost to Spain 2-0 on Saturday.

India was rewarded with a penalty corner late in the first quarter, and made the most of it as Rohidas scored.

The second quarter produced end-to-end action, with both teams creating chances.

Australia had 10 circle penetrations and a couple of penalty corners while India had nine circle penetrations, causing problems on the counter attack.

Australia continued to dominate possession after the restart.

The Indian defensive line remained resolute at the back though and doubled the lead with Jugraj converting a powerful drag-flick from a penalty corner.

The hosts managed to reduce the deficit early in the fourth quarter. With time running out, Australia eventually found the leveller from a set-piece.

It an intense shootout both teams converted their first four penalties.

However, Aditya Arjun Lalage was denied by Snowden, giving Australia a hard-fought win.

India will next take on Spain on Tuesday.

The result: Australia 2 (Joel Rintala 47, 56) drew with India 2 (Amit Rohidas 15, Jugraj Singh 43) (Australia won 5-4 on penalties).

Sahil, Ravina take the honours in Indian Open race walk

ATHLETICS

Sports Bureau
CHANDIGARH

While Akshdeep appeared to have initially won, the Punjab athlete was penalised four minutes, pushing him to seventh

Home boy Sahil stunned his more fancied rivals to clinch the inaugural men's half-marathon (21km) on the second and final day of the 13th Indian Open race walk competition at the Sukhna Lake on Sunday.

While Akshdeep Singh appeared to have initially won, the Punjab athlete was penalised four minutes, pushing him to seventh spot.

The 24-year-old Sahil clocked 1:25:48 to push Asian Championships medallist Servin Sebastian to the second spot, just two seconds behind.

Akshdeep Singh had won this race, but due to a penalty, four minutes were added to his timing.

Akshdeep's final timing was registered as 1:27:37.

Haryana's Ravina took the honours in the women's half-marathon, winning in 1:39:15.00 to extend her unbeaten run at home.

The 29-year-old had won the Indian Open last year (20km) along with the National Games and the Inter-State Championships to stamp her authority over the distance.

The results: Men: Half-marathon (21km) walk: 1. Sahil (Pun, 1:25:48), 2. Servin Sebastian (TN, 1:25:50), 3. Hardeep (Har, 1:26:03). **U-20 5km race walk:** 1. Tushar Panwar (Utk, 19:59), 2. Himanshu Panwar (Utk, 20:08), 3. Praveen (Raj, 20:12). **Women: Half-marathon (21km) walk:** 1. Ravina (Har, 1:39:15), 2. Munita Prajapati (UP, 1:39:26), 3. Mansi Negi (Utk, 1:42:58). **U-20 5km race walk:** 1. Manisha (Raj, 23:24), 2. Yogita (Har, 23:49), 3. Simran Gusain (Utk, 23:58).

City keeps snapping at Arsenal's heels; Inter zooms ahead

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Heading it in: O'Reilly rises high to nod home City's second against Newcastle. REUTERS

Manchester City piled pressure on Premier League leader Arsenal after Nico O'Reilly's brace clinched it a 2-1 home win against Newcastle United.

Pep Guardiola's side wasn't at its best but it held on for a victory that moved it within two points of Arsenal. On Sunday, Alexis Mac Allister struck in the seventh minute of stoppage time to help Liverpool edge its host Nottingham Forest 1-0.

In the LaLiga, Raul Garcia's 90th-minute strike consigned leader Real Madrid to a 1-2 defeat at Osasuna on Saturday, in a blow to its title hopes. Atletico Madrid got back to winning ways with a 4-2 victory over Espanyol.

Henrikh Mkhitaryan's second-half goal helped Inter Milan move 10 points clear at Serie A summit with a 2-0 win at Lecce.

Important results:
Premier League: Nottingham Forest 0 lost to Liverpool 1 (Mac Allister 90+7); Sunderland 1 (Le Fee 76-pen) lost to Fulham 3 (Jimenez 54, 61-pen, Iwobi 85).
Serie A: Atalanta 2 (Pasalic 61, Samardzic 81) bt Napoli 1 (Beukema 18).

On Saturday: Premier League: Manchester City 2 (O'Reilly 14, 27) bt Newcastle 1 (Hall 22).
LaLiga: Osasuna 2 (Budimir 38-pen, Raul Garcia 90) bt Real Madrid 1 (Vinicius 73).
Atletico Madrid 4 (Sorloth 21, 72, Simeone 49, Lookman 58) bt Espanyol 2 (Jofre 6, Exposito 80).
Serie A: Lecce 0 lost to Inter Milan 2 (Mkhitaryan 75, Akanji 82).
Bundesliga: RB Leipzig 2 (Baumgartner 20, 39) drew with Borussia Dortmund 2 (Romulo 50-og, Silva 90+5).

Greek Sakellaridis emerges champion in the Delhi Open

TENNIS

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Greece's Stefanos Sakellaridis claimed his maiden ATP Challenger singles title by beating fifth seed Oliver Crawford 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (6) in the Delhi Open final at the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA) Complex here on Sunday. The 21-year-old from Athens was down a break and on the brink of defeat when he was trailing 2-5 in the third and final set, but the youngster, standing at six feet and six inches, hung in and fought back to clinch the tie after three hours and nine minutes.

The opening set witnessed five breaks of serve before Sakellaridis edged it 7-5. The unseeded Greek carried the momentum into the second set, breaking early to take a 2-0 lead. However, the Brit responded strongly, drawing on his experience to turn the set around and take the match to a decider.

Sakellaridis broke in the opening game of the third set, but was unable to consolidate his advantage. Crawford won six of the next seven games to surge ahead 5-2. Just when the match appeared to be slipping away from Sakellaridis, he managed to stage a stirring comeback.

With the win, he earned 75 ATP ranking points and $17,000 in prize money.

"It was a very big fight in the final. There were lots of ups and downs," Sakellaridis said after the win. "I was managing to play at a good level at many, many moments that managed to get me through."

The result: Singles (final): Stefanos Sakellaridis (Gre) bt Oliver Crawford (GBr) 7-5, 4-6, 7-6(6).

Vaishnavi goes down to Vandewinkel in final

Sports Bureau
BENGALURU

Vaishnavi with the champion Vandewinkel.

Third seed and World No. 124 Hanne Vandewinkel of Belgium capped a dominant week with a 6-0, 6-1 victory over wildcard Vaishnavi Adkar in the final of the KPB Trust ITF Women's Open W100 tournament at the S.M. Krishna Stadium here on Sunday.

Vaishnavi, the 21-year-old from Pune who entered the tournament ranked 690, will rise up more than 200 places to be ranked in the 460s.

On Saturday, she had become the first Indian woman since Sania Mirza to reach an ITF W100 Final.

For her runner-up finish, Vaishnavi will gain 65 points and be richer by $8,147.

KARNATAKA ROUND-UP

Pavilion block in Rajnagar Stadium to be named after Sunil Joshi

HUBBALLI: The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) will name the Pavilion Block at the KSCA Rajnagar Stadium in Hubballi in honour of former India cricketer Sunil Joshi.

Left-arm spinner Joshi, who hails from the nearby Gadag district, was capped 15 times by India in Tests (for 41 wickets) and on 69 occasions in ODIs (69 scalps). The Karnataka stalwart also has a proud First Class record, accounting for a whopping 615 wickets.

A ceremony is scheduled to be held during day one of the 2025-26 Ranji Trophy final between Karnataka and Jammu & Kashmir in Hubballi on Tuesday.

Mumbai takes the first innings lead over Karnataka

MUMBAI: Openers Angkrish Raghuvanshi (92) and Ayush Jethwa (139 batting) helped Mumbai cruise past Karnataka's first-innings total on the second day of the C.K. Nayudu (U-23) Trophy quarterfinal on Sunday.

The scores: Karnataka 240 vs. Mumbai 310/1 in 97 overs (Angkrish Raghuvanshi 92, Ayush Jethwa 139 batting, Manan Bhatt 64 batting).

LIVE TELECAST

Men's T20 World Cup: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7 p.m.
ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: DAZN, 11 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)
LaLiga: FanCode, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)
Premier League: SS Select 1 & JioHotstar, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

72 The League from tomorrow

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

The first official franchise-owned golfing league in the country had its opening ceremony here on Saturday night with the inaugural edition set to tee off on Tuesday at the ITC Classic course, Gurugram.

Launched by the PGTI, '72 The League' will have leading Indian golfers on the domestic professional circuittake on each other in match-play format comprising singles, four-ball and foursomes contests.

The league features six teams.

The teams: Capital Lancers, Charminar Champions, Kolkata Classics, Mumbai Aces, Rajasthan Regals, UP Promethans.

Red-ball deeds make J & K a dominant force: Rasool

The State's flag-bearer says the sport in the region changed for the better after Bedi was brought on board in 2011; as it approaches its maiden final, the team aspires to be part of the big league

RANJI TROPHY

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

When Parvez Rasool debuted for India against Bangladesh in an ODI in June 2014, he broke the glass ceiling. It was the first time a cricketer from Jammu & Kashmir was representing the country.

The latest breaking-the-barrier moment has come in the Ranji Trophy, with the State ready to play its maiden final, against Karnataka in Hubballi from Tuesday. And the former skipper, quite understandably, is chuffed.

A step away: J & K would hope to have the perfect ending to its fairytale run. FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

Moment of pride

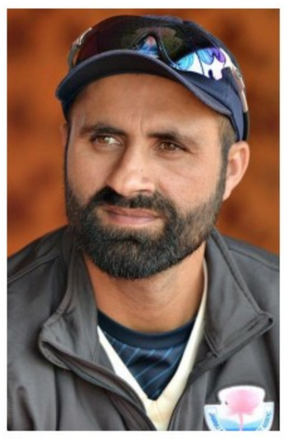
"It's a proud moment for all of us associated with J & K cricket," Rasool told *The Hindu*. "Coming from the smaller States, these things matter a lot. And red-ball cricket is real cricket - batting, bowling and fielding are all tested and for long periods."

J & K played the Ranji quarterfinals in 2013-14 and 2019-20 under Rasool's captaincy, but it was last year that it turned into a force to reckon with. It lost out on a semifinal berth after conceding an agonisingly narrow one-run first-innings lead to Kerala but has bounced back from that heartbreak sensationally.

"I will go back to the time when Bishen Singh Bedi sir came into J & K cricket (2011) and that's when our mindset changed," said the 37-year-old, who played 75 Ranji matches.

"Before that, participation was enough. But the great man told us '*beta*, go and compete. You have the skills'. Getting to the quarters, and then the final now, are all part of the same process.

"Earlier, we didn't have many inspirations because we didn't do much in domestic cricket and there were hardly any games back home. And unless you win, nobody cares. Now, entire J & K is following us and expectations are building. I hope we play the Vijay Hazare and Syed Mushtaq Ali finals too."



Rasool. FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

One of the biggest drivers of J & K's recent success has been speedster Auqib Nabi, the Player-of-the-Match in both the quarterfinal (Madhya Pradesh) and semifinal (Bengal) games.

The 29-year-old pacer has bagged 55 wickets in this Ranji season, only four shy of leader Mayank Mishra.

Consistency is key

Nabi was the second-highest wicket-taker in the previous edition with 44 scalps. Admirably, he has been the only pacer in the top five both seasons.

"At one point, there was Nabi, and there was the rest of India," Rasool said, with a proud laugh.

"The way he has maintained his body to bowl 30 to 40 overs per game across two seasons is unbelievable. And he is also doing well against strong teams. He played the Duleep Trophy and took a hat-trick (four in four balls). He has been phenomenal and hopefully, we win the title".

Lalbiaknia secures a draw for NorthEast United against BFC

ISL

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

A fine piece of skill from Lalrinzuala Lalbiaknia helped NorthEast United FC secure a 1-1 draw against Bengaluru FC in an ISL clash at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Sunday.

Lalbiaknia made an instant impact after coming on in the 64th minute.

The NorthEast striker controlled a long ball from Asheer Akhtar with a deft first touch, before unleashing a powerful strike to beat BFC custodian Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

Lalbiaknia's clinical finish was in contrast to the shots hit by his nervy teammates, who missed chances aplenty.

Super sub: Lalbiaknia, left, scored just four minutes after coming on. J. ALLEN EGENUSE

Earlier in the evening, the home team drew first blood through a fantastic individual effort from Braian Sanchez.

In the 19th minute, the Argentine midfielder cut to his right and glided past his markers.

Sanchez finished the move with a low, hard strike from outside the 18-yard box, which nestled into the bottom left corner.

The match, played in front of 13,000-odd boisterous fans, witnessed several attacking plays from both teams. Parthib Gogoi's attempt from close range in the opening minute, Michel Zabaco's header and M.S. Jithin's powerful shot kept the visiting team's hopes alive in the first half.

NEUFC came close in the 62nd minute when Jairo Samperio latched on to a through ball, but once again, the quality of the finish was not up to the mark.

At the other end, BFC nearly found a late winner via Ryan Williams, whose effort bounced off the crossbar.

The result: Bengaluru FC 1 (Braian Sanchez 19) drew with NorthEast United FC 1 (Lalrinzuala Lalbiaknia 68).

Chhangte earns full points for Mumbai

P.K. Ajith Kumar
KOCHI

The drama on field may not have quite matched what happened off it 24 hours earlier, but there was plenty of action in Kerala Blasters' first home fixture this ISL season.

But it was the visiting side that walked away with three points on Sunday night. Mumbai City won 1-0, with Lallianzuala Chhangte striking early in the second half at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

More than the match, it was the very stadium that made more news on Saturday. There was even a possibility of this game not going ahead at all, with the ground's owner Greater Cochin Development Authority asking for higher rent, and it was only late into the evening that the issue was settled.

Killer blow: Chhangte, right, found the target early in the second half. R.K. NITHIN

If the Blasters players were affected by all that avoidable anxiety, they did not show it. They pressed forward and created chances up front, but Mumbai also was just as keen, as the opening half produced some fine end-to-end football.

The men from Mumbai got a golden opportunity to take the lead midway through the first half.

They were awarded a penalty kick for a foul by Danish Farooq, but Jorge Pereyra Díaz, the prolific scorer, failed to convert; he was denied by goalkeeper Arsh Shaikh, who pushed the ball smartly away.

Chhangte, however, made up for that, as he found the target following a deflection from Brandon Fernandes. That was enough for Mumbai to post its second win in as many games, while Blasters is without a point.

The result: Kerala Blasters 0 lost to Mumbai City 1 (Chhangte 47).

Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways
Government of India
A GATEWAY TO VIKSIT BHARAT
Transformative Boost to Infrastructure
Inauguration of and
Foundation Stone Laying for
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Employment generation and regional industrial growth
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KEY BENEFITS:
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Promotion of tourism and public recreation
Enhanced urban amenities in Tuticorin
Digital Twin Implementation and Road Widening for Urban-Port Connectivity
KEY BENEFITS:
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Improved connectivity between city and port
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KEY BENEFITS:
Strengthened healthcare outreach
Sustainable livelihood support for fishermen
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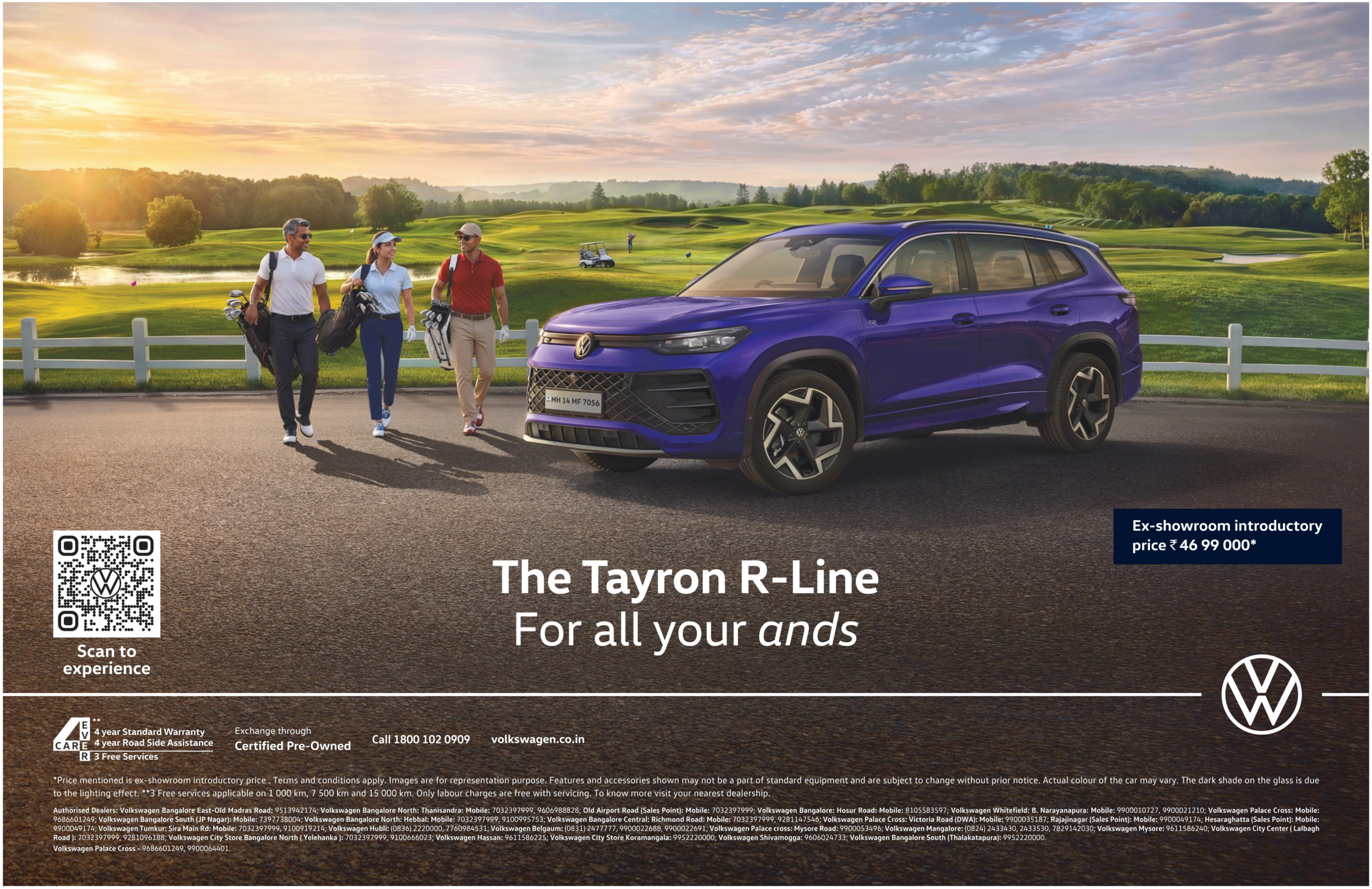

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